BING

Summer
2017

No. 176

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

Founded in 1936, the world's longest-running fan club - as recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records

OUR MISSION: To perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing Crosby for the benefit of future generations

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Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

October 14, 1977 sees the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing and we are keen to remind the media about this. Already I am nudging some of the local radio stations here in the UK and I'll follow up again at the end of September. Can we ask all members to consider an approach to their local newspapers / radio and TV outlets please? Ron Field in Morton, WA, has already fixed up a special film show at his local theatre.

Our mission is to perpetuate the memory and the musical legacy of Bing for the benefit of future generations and this is the kind of action which will help. The stars of our kind of music are slowly fading from sight as are their fan clubs. The Sinatra Music Society in the UK is still going strong but they report that they have lost 100 members in the last 18 months.

Gary Giddins has been in touch and it seems that his publisher is planning a 2018 release of "Bing Crosby, Swinging on a Star, the War Years, 1940-1946." Frustrating to us and of course to Gary but it will be worth the wait.

This issue has a major article from Bob Phillips who worked with Bing Crosby Enterprises in the early 1950s, Anton discusses the "Feels Good, Feels Right" album whilst David Lobosco looks at Bing's film *Here Come the Waves*. Jeremy Rose considers the first Decca session, Martin McQuade has an interview with José Feliciano, Bruce Hanson remembers the "Bing's Hollywood" series, Ken Crossland highlights the importance of album covers and Gord Atkinson gives us an excerpt from his latest book. As always, Graham Pascoe has lots to tell us about Bing's impact "down-under", Richard Baker presents his "Keeping Track" and there's plenty more besides. It really is wonderful to have this much material so many years after Bing's demise.

Our front cover fits in nicely with Bob Phillips' article about Bing recording his radio shows. The back cover shows Bing with Phil Harris and Alice Faye on a Hollywood Palace show broadcast on February 18, 1967. The back inside cover has an interesting letter dating from 1957 to Charles Graves, (1 December 1899 – 21 February 1971) the journalist and writer, and brother of the novelist and poet Robert Graves. Charles Graves was a keen golfer.

Finally, the winter issue of BING magazine will be a new departure for us because for a small extra payment we shall have full colour on the inside pages. It will be a challenge to find enough colour photographs to match up with the various articles but we'll do our best!

Now over to Anton…

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com

It's summer again, and the heat has already hit northwest Tennessee hard, though not nearly as much as it has other parts of the U.S., such as Arizona and New Mexico. It looks like, as Irving Berlin wrote and Bing sang to the late Buddy Bregman's brassy arrangement, "we're having a heat wave" around the country! And this year, as we slowly approach October and the fortieth anniversary of Bing's passing in Madrid, Spain, back in 1977, I am happy to echo and support my fellow British Co-Editor's friendly suggestion to all members to get involved in any sort of activity aimed at remembering Bing and honoring his very important legacy. It could be a letter to the editor of the local newspaper in your town. Or it could be a call to the local radio station to remind them of the occasion. Or it could be a brief talk about Bing's life and career at a local club. Or it could be perhaps a film showing at the local library or movie theater. Or it could be simply a chance to tell your friends, family members, or children about Bing and to share some of your favorite tracks with them. I am glad to hear that some of our members are already engaging in efforts like these, and I myself have begun to contact the university where I work and the public library with an eye at putting together some sort of Crosby-related event. Whatever we can do together to advance public knowledge about Bing's figure and artistic output and to remind the media about the upcoming anniversary will always be time well spent.

As Malcolm also mentions, my contribution to this new issue of BING is a new installment in my ongoing series of articles about Crosby albums that aren't readily available on CD, either because they were never issued in that format or because they have gone out of print. On this occasion I take a look at *Feels Good, Feels Right*, recorded in London in 1976 with musical direction and charts by Alan Cohen, one of Bing's best and at the same time most neglected records of his exceedingly prolific twilight years. I hope you will find it interesting and perhaps it will make you want to dust off your vinyl or CD copies of the album!

Like Malcolm, I am amazed at the sheer amount, variety, and quality of the contributions to the magazine that we have received this time around, all of them very informative and appealing in their own right and ample proof of the immense knowledge of the contributors about anything that has to do with Bing. So since I am sure everyone is looking forward to turning the page and delving into the ensuing articles and reviews, I will say no more for now. I simply would like to wish all members the most enjoyable of summers (as far away from the heat wave as possible, that is), and to those of you living in the Southern Hemisphere, just remember that a ballad sung by Bing's inimitable baritone voice will always warm the coldest of nights.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez antongarciafdez@gmail.com

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

Many members contacted me and others in the team about the late arrival of the spring issue. Malcolm had signed the magazine off with the printer in mid-march but we had to delay telling him how many to print pending information from Wig. Malcolm had made a special appeal for members to renew promptly in the winter edition of BING but when Wig got home from hospital on Feb 23rd, he found that 91 members had not paid their dues.

Wig quickly despatched chaser letters which reduced the arrears but yet a third reminder had to be sent some weeks later. We were not able to tell the printer how many copies we required until April 15th. Perry Huntoon, who very kindly agreed to mail out BING, was on holiday until May 7th and then unprecedented problems with the courier meant that the magazines did not arrive at his home until May 18th.

So my profuse apologies to all who paid on time and hopefully late payers will avoid causing so much consternation and delay for other members when renewals become due in December 2017.

Happily, Wig is very much more mobile now and he can get to his local library to deal with e-mail correspondence although he cannot handle the heavy parcels of BING magazines. We are very fortunate that **Perry Huntoon** and **Scott Payne** have kindly offered their services to distribute the magazines for the US and Canada respectively.

Sales of the "Join Bing and Sing Along" double CD set have been modest to-date but we are grateful to those members who have supported this release.

I must mention the splendid get-togethers being organised by Jason Liddiard and I send my grateful thanks to Jason and Sharon for their hospitality.

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members with a wish that they will derive much interest and enjoyment from their membership of the club.

UNITED STATES/CANADA

Tony Adams (Indianapolis, Indiana), Dan Colavito (Flushing, New York), Tom Monaghan (Ann Habor, Michigan), Melissa Mannarino (Houston, Texas), Larry VanMersbergen (Franklin Park, Illinois)

DONATIONS

The ICC continues to be very fortunate in having generous benefactors who consistently support the club with their financial contributions and we are delighted to acknowledge further generous donations from: -

Roger Addey (Camborne, Cornwall) and **Elisa Van Riper** (Whiting, New Jersey) who have gifted exceptional donations for which we are deeply grateful. Elisa made a legacy payment on behalf of her late husband Charles Van Riper, a long-time member of the ICC. Roger and Elisa are supported by all the generous members listed below.

UNITED KINGDOM

Tom Wallace, Arthur Blood, Ken Shaw, Frank Startup, John Byrd, Michael Portley, Norman Jones.

BELGIUM

Michael Haefner

CANADA

Gord Atkinson, Scott Payne, Barry Birch, Britton Smith, Alan Matheson, Ben Weaver.

UNITED STATES

Howard Crosby, Jack Boyle, Sean Joyce, Tom Chevrette, Michael Keiser, Joseph Clay, Laurence Kieran, James Clifford, Glen Liestol, Theresa Crestella, Paul Murphy, Edward Press, James Crowley, Ronald Reichard, Milton Cummings, Michael Reilly, David Currie, Rev Eugene Roberts, Anthony DiFlorio, Richard Ryan, Stanley Diebel, Judy Schmid, Martin Dombush,

Ted Schoemburg, Laurence Doyle, Richard Shoemaker, Robert Edelstein, Marq Stankowski, David Foe, Michael Strada, Arne Fogel, Dale Thieker, William Franklin, Phillip Turfle, Jeff Freeman, Greg Van Beek, Gregg Hammond, Charles Vincent, Rev Jerome Heyman, Ben Whitley, Bill Hunt, Leah Yolo.

As I have said before, our benefactors help keep the ICC viable and it is heart-warming to have support like this. It makes it all worthwhile.

DEATHS

We are sorry to report the loss of Harvey Lowe (Falls Church, Virginia), Marcie Kukla (Rockford, Illinois), Al O'Hagan (Deptford, New Jersey) and Charles Van Riper (Whiting, New Jersey).

Our sincere condolences are extended to family and friends.

BING CROSBY ON CD

This is my usual reminder that the following single CDs remain available from me with the price for the UK being £7.50, Europe £9.50 and the rest of the world £10.50. The price for the double CD is £9.50 UK, £11.50 Ireland & Europe, £15 for rest of the world.

Members in the US and Canada should obtain their copies from Wig Wiggins and in Australia/New Zealand from David Currington.

BING CROSBY – THROUGH THE YEARS – Vols. 4, 8, 9 and 10

BING CROSBY and the Kraft Music Hall – Rare Original Survivors

THE ROAD TO HONG KONG – SAY ONE FOR ME

BING CROSBY – GOOD AND RARE VOL 3.

JOIN BING & SING ALONG (2 CD SET)

Until winter, my warmest greetings to all members.

Michael Crampton mdcrampton@gmail.com

Another Alternate

Richard Baker has news of an unexpected alternate take (or possibly two?)

I am continually surprised that after all these years there are new things to be discovered or revealed. And very grateful that there are people around who are still sufficiently interested to notice them or actively search them out. In March a contributor to the Crosby Fan World Bulletin board, who prefers to be known merely as Ted, drew attention to a CD compilation issued by Capitol in 2004 called "Christmas Classics". It includes one track from Bing - "Winter Wonderland", recorded in 1962. Ted pointed out that the recording sounded different. He said:

"Anyone familiar with that record will immediately recognize the difference - the voice sounds more natural, with far less reverb and echo than has always been present in the mix of the original 1962 LP. The backup orchestration and chorus also sounds differently remixed. But it's not just a different remix - it's clearly a different take. You can tell at a number of points, including at the end, where Bing does not hold the final "-land" for long."

On one count I have to take issue with Ted. I think I'm fairly familiar with the record and I bring it out each year, yet I don't think I'd notice the difference when just hearing it on its own. However I obtained a copy and undertook a side by side comparison, and he is correct. There are differences right through the recording which do become obvious on detailed comparison. In my opinion the most easily identifiable difference without having to resort to switching between the two versions is at the 45-second point where the previously issued recording has Bing sing

"He'll say 'are you married?' We'll say no - man"

with a brief pause between "No" and "man" which lends some emphasis but breaks the rhythm, whilst the newly discovered version has the words "no man" sung straight through without the emphasis created by the pause.

There are several other changes in timing and I agree with Ted about the overall feeling and sound of the record. The voice does sound more relaxed and because of this and because the differences are so consistent throughout I think Ted is correct about this not being merely a remix. The discovery inevitably raises questions. Though it has generally been accepted that with the introduction of tape recording Bing did not readily make complete alternates, is it possible that there may be similar treatment for other tracks of this LP? Why, I wonder, was the originally issued version chosen and why might the 2004 CD contain the alternate? If this was done deliberately one might expect more to be made of the fact, but the track is merely one of 16 on an otherwise unremarkable Christmas compilation, typical of many others that come out year after year, so it looks accidental that it has just "slipped out".

There is a copy of the "new" version on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zifGp5KTBKg

The CD in question is Capitol "Christmas Classics" 7 24357 08882. It is still available and can also be downloaded and streamed from the likes of Amazon and Spotify. As there are many others with very similar titles it is worth knowing that the front consists of a single stylised silver snowflake with the title in red.

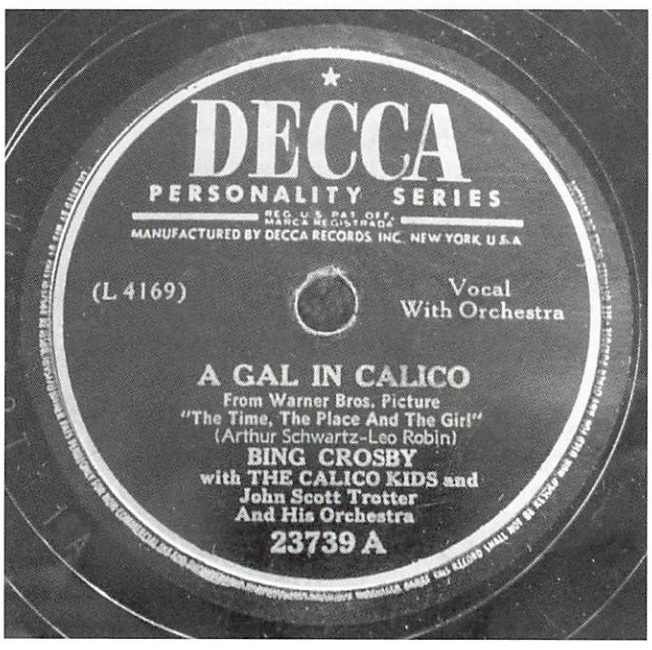
Other artists on the CD include such as Nat King Cole, Dean Martin and Peggy Lee.

- And possibly THREE Gals in Calico?

Over the years the takes of 'A Gal in Calico' have provided something of a puzzle. In 'Alternate Bing

Crosby', Colin Pugh compared the issued take on L4169-A recorded on 7th May 1946 with an alternate which he thought might be the known rejected take L4134 of 20th March 1946, but was uncertain whether he might in fact have another, presumably recorded on 7th May 1946 and therefore possibly L4169-B, and produced reasons for each possibility. It is clear from Colin's narrative that he was not working from an original pressing and he mentions a copy received from America and another from Germany. I think it likely that the German copy he had was from a 2LP set on German MCA titled "Star Gold" which was covered by Bert Bishop in "Keeping Track" in BING #55 of January 1980. The difference Colin identified for certain was that the issued L4169-A contained the words *"I'll take my gal in calico down in Santa Fe"* whereas the alternate omitted the word "I'll" from this line. With the Jonzo Chronological series on volume 42 we are on more certain ground because there the rejected L4134 was taken from an identified test pressing. Just as Colin says the standout difference is the omission of "I'll". But was he actually assessing L4134 or something else, which also omits "I'll" but with other differences?

Theo Morgan, writing on Crosby Fan World, raised a query about the version on his CD "16 Original World Hits", issued in Germany and Australia. (This CD appears to have taken most of the content from the Star Gold LP set already mentioned). Theo had noticed differences in playing times and wondered whether it was in fact the rejected take. I checked my Australian copy of "16 Original World Hits". "I'll" was indeed missing and that seemed conclusive. However I had both the known reject L4134 and the track from "16 Original World Hits" mounted side by side and I thought I heard subtle differences in the strength given by Bing to individual syllables and timings in gaps between words. I exchanged thoughts with Theo and together we identified the differences we thought we heard.



To avoid repetition I will call the version on "16 Original World Hits" merely "alt" and the known reject L4134 "rej".

Alt has a slightly more staccato orchestral accompaniment in the opening passage and throughout Bing places slightly more emphasis on the first word of each phrase.

At 1:20 the lyric *"I'm just a country boy, and any country boy..."* on the second "country" rej has 'count-ry', the alt has no pause.

At 1:37 rej *"I'd better let her"* sounds "*I'd bett - er - let 'er"* alt sounds *"I - 'd better let 'er"*

At 1:55 the line *"gonna quit the rodeo"* there is a very slight pause before 'rodeo' on rej but not on alt.

Whilst the differences are minimal, I think they exist and become more obvious when magnified screenshots of the waveform are examined. But I still have a residual doubt. Is it really an alternate take or has some sort of distortion or manipulation occurred? Following the discussion on "Crosby Fan World" I received an email asking about such things as tape stretch. I would imagine tape stretch would introduce obvious distortion as "wow" and I can't think of any other logical possibilities. In my view the rejected version is inferior and reasons for rejection exist, whilst the alt. is a very slight improvement because the words flow more easily. Colin Pugh expresses some surprise that the version he examined was passed over. Might the Alt version have been recorded at the same time as the reject (with the same omission of "I'll") but possibly then retained for potential issue, only to be overtaken by preference for the further try in May? Or is it possible that it was recorded at the same session as the issued L4169-A, with Bing still omitting "I'll" before the producer pointed out the omission. To me at least there does seem to be a slight emphasis on "I'll" in the issued version L4169-A.

I'd welcome thoughts and contributions. Email me (bakerstonb@gmail.com) and I will return email attachments of digital copies and screenshots illustrating the differences in a graphical way

"16 Original World Hits" is on German MCA CD 8-62008 LZ (256 137.2) or Australian MFP MFPCD 023. Both have been around for a long time but appear on eBay and elsewhere.

Richard Baker **bakerstonb@gmail.com**

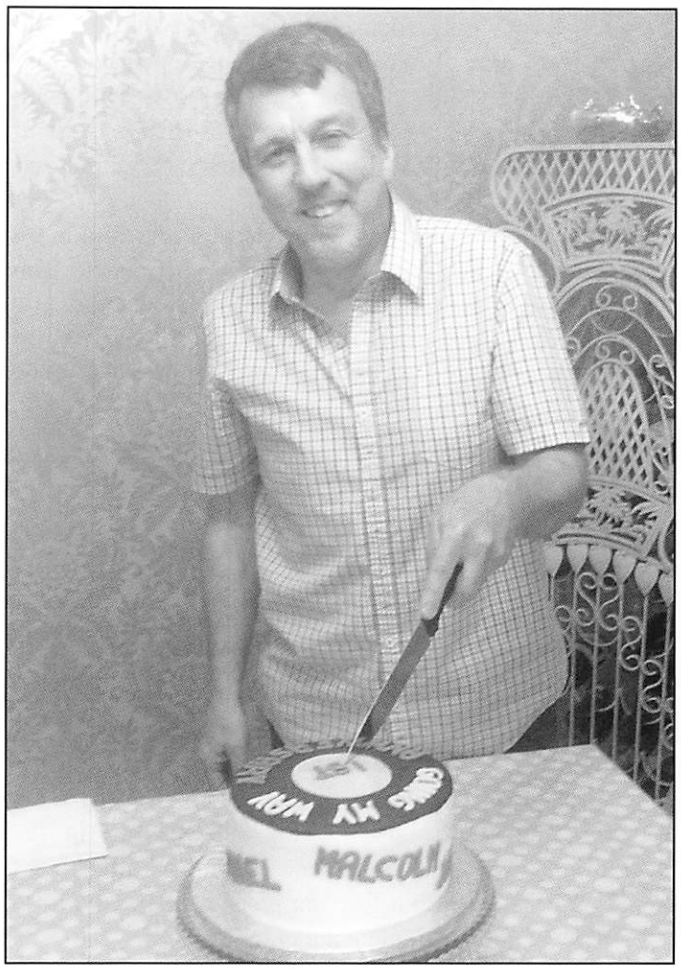
Going My Way in Warrington

Jason Liddiard reports on the latest get-togethers.

The spring and summer get-togethers of the *Going My Way* branch of the ICC were held 25th March & 3rd June, respectively at the now usual venue on Winwick Park, Warrington in the UK. Our themes, spread over the

two meetings were Bing's jazz recordings, Bing in the 1970s, Bing in the 1930s and Bing & Co. So, plenty to get our teeth (and ears) into!

The summer meeting also marked our first anniversary, as it was in June 2016 that we held our first Warrington clambake.



Jason cuts the splendid anniversary cake.

Welcome!

Members were aptly greeted at each meeting by our opening tracks 'Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year' from the *Seasons* album; a track which nicely represented our spring themes, being from the 1970s and containing a jazzy piano solo in the bridge, and 'In the Good Old Summer Time', the 1954 version and final commercial recording made with John Scott Trotter.

News & Reviews

An opportunity to discuss anything new on the Crosby scene, we covered the announcement that Gary Giddins's eagerly awaited second volume of Bing's biography 'Bing Crosby, Swinging on a Star, the War Years, 1940-46' should be available sometime in the second half of next year.

Michael Crampton had brought along some copies of the new Sepia release of Bing's sing-along albums and so we dipped into a few tracks. The sound quality has truly breathed new life into these recordings from the late 50s and early 60s.

Malcolm Macfarlane brought along a copy of a stateside magazine called 'Films of the Golden Age', #87 winter 2016/17. Inside is a terrific article by Malcolm, titled *Bing Crosby: Swinging on a Star*. I urge members to find a copy of this interesting publication, if it's still available.

We played a small musical tribute to Alice Ludes, the last of the Music Maids who died 12th February aged 104.

We also discussed some recent radio appearances by Bing, notably on the regular BBC Anne Hopper and Don Black shows. In keeping with our themes, we played a couple of tracks which had been recently featured on these shows: 'I Wish I Were Aladdin' (w. Dorsey Bros) from the 1935 film *Two for Tonight*, and 'Lazy Bones' (w. Louis Armstrong and Jack Teagarden) from a Chesterfield Show of January 1950.

Overall there was much to report on the radio scene, including an airplay of 'St. Louis Blues' featuring Bing with the Duke Ellington orchestra of 1932 on the fabulous *Geoffrey Smith's Jazz* programme from BBC Radio 3.

The Argentina release

We marked the end of an era for those of us who tune into the North-West radio scene, as the wonderfully supportive Anne Hopper retired from her weekly radio show back in April. Her final Bing track was what Anne herself termed 'late Bing', the 1977 version of 'April Showers'. Good luck, Anne, and happy retirement!

As a tribute to band leader Buddy Bregman, who died in January of this year, we played 'Mountain Greenery', a quintessential Bing track of the 1950s.

In recognition of Dame Vera Lynn's 100th birthday on 20th March, we played a couple of YouTube clips from Dame Vera's July 1975 TV show, featuring Bing as guest. This was followed by Bing's version of 'Yours',

w. Buddy Cole from 1956, a song closely associated with Dame Vera.

We featured yet another centenary celebration during our summer session, by remembering Ella Fitzgerald who would have been 100 years old on 25th April this year. As a tribute we played Bing and Ella collaborating on 'Memphis Blues' from a 1950 Chesterfield show, followed by Bing's version of 'Mack the Knife' from 1957's *Bing with a Be*at, a song famously associated with Ella.

Our summer gathering also featured a short tribute to John Marshall, a true Crosby stalwart who, as was reported in BING #175, had sadly passed away last November.

A Few of my Favourite Bings!

For the spring meeting we invited attendees to select a favourite Bing jazz recording. (Too much choice!) I kicked things off with one of my personal favourites 'PS I Love You', a Johnny Mercer song featured by Bing on a 1953 General Electric show, w. John Scott Trotter and a fine Ziggy Elman trumpet solo.

Keith Richmond, attending his second *Going My Way* meeting chose 'Goodbye, My Lover, Goodbye' (w. The Jesters and Bob Haggart and his orchestra) from 1947, taken from the Brunswick LP *Bing and the Dixieland Bands.*

Other choices included 'Dream a Little Dream of Me', from the superb *Bing with a Beat*, 'Now You Has Jazz' (of course!) 'I'm Crazy Over You' (w. Sam Lanin and his orchestra) from 1929 and 'Dinah' (w. the Mills Bros).

Liza and Bing on the Bell Telephone show.

We were just as much spoilt for choice at the summer meeting, having to select favourite recordings from the 1930s. I started the ball rolling with 'Ridin' Around in the Rain' and others chipped in with 'The Last Round-Up', 'Can I Forget You', 'Stardust', 'I've Got to Pass Your House', 'My Love' and 'Thine Alone'.

The Crosby Quiz

Our spring quiz focused on Bing in the 70s and steered us to play 'What I Did For Love',' We've Only Just Begun', 'Change Partners', 'The Best Things in Life Are Free', 'Have a Nice Day' (from *That's What Life Is All About*), 'The More I See You', 'Nevertheless' and 'June in January' (1977).

We also had questions which led us to a few more Youtube clips, including Bing's appearance at the Bob Hope Olympic Benefit held in Montreal in 1976 and Bing's duet with Liza Minnelli on 'The Way We Were' for the Bell Telephone Jubilee, also from 1976. Plus Bing and Fred Astaire teaching us how to 'Sing' from Bing's 1975 Christmas show.

The theme for the summer quiz was Bing & Co., and we heard Bing joining forces with the likes of Satchmo, the Mills Brothers, Mary Martin, the Music Maids, plus musicians Bix Beiderbecke, Buddy Cole and Red Nichols amongst others.

Album Choice

Combining both spring themes (Bing's jazz recordings & Bing in the 70s) our album choice was *Bing 'n Basie*, the Daybreak album from 1972.

Our summer choice was the Brunswick 10" LP from c.1952 'Bing & Connee'. With this playing in the background, we took some time out for a refreshment break and tucked into a fine anniversary cake, courtesy of the Hey-Diddle-Diddle cake company!

Film/TV Show selection

We began the spring meeting section with Bing's rendition of 'Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head' on the Bing Crosby TV show 'Cooling It', from April 1970, which left us all wishing that Bing had made a recording of this for inclusion on an album from that period.

We then watched the new documentary by Bing's nephew, son of brother Bob, Chris Crosby (reviewed elsewhere in these pages). We all agreed that the piece would have benefitted from some editing, and that much of the content was not directly concerning Bing. It was good, however, to see again some of the interviews with Bing's co-stars, even if some of the footage was a couple of decades old or more. Overall feeling was, this was not the sort of documentary that would merit watching more than once…

For our summer fest we watched a number of theatrical trailers from the 1930s, including 'We're Not Dressing', 'Mississippi' and 'Sing You Sinners'.

Next Meeting

Our autumn gathering is scheduled to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing on Saturday, 14th October at the usual time of 1230 – 1730h. If you are in

or near the North-West of England around that time, you will be more than welcome to attend. Y'all come, now!

Jason Liddiard

New KFC advert features Bing

Neil Colombari of Mona Vale, New South Wales, flagged up the new advert for Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) in Australia which uses Bing's "Straight Down the Middle". The commercial shows a golfer having trouble in getting his ball out of a bunker. One of his bored companions spots an offer for a $5 lunch at KFC and next we see all three of golfers sitting in the bunker eating their lunch. All to the accompaniment of Bing singing his most famous golfing song.

You can see it on YouTube – go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hozDm1otfiA

Feels Good, Feels Right: A Neglected Gem from Bing Crosby's Latter-Day Period

Anton Garcia-Fernandez takes a look at one of Bing's albums from his final years.

Bing Crosby's recording activity in the last few years of his life, what has become known as the "latter-day Crosby" period, was frankly amazing, both for the sheer amount and the undeniable quality of his output. For example, in 1975 alone, Bing entered the studio enough times to complete five albums: *A Southern Memoir*, *That's What Life Is All About*, *At My Time of Life, Bingo Viejo* (about which I wrote at length in BING #173), and his collaboration with old friend Fred Astaire, *A Couple of Song and Dance Men*, not to mention a reading of Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* with musical accompaniment. Then, in 1976 he found time to cut two more LPs: *Feels Good, Feels Right* and *Beautiful Memories*. The former, recorded in London over the course of four different sessions for British Decca, remains one of the most satisfying efforts of Crosby's twilight years. Being one of his albums not readily available on CD at the time of this writing (it has gone sadly out of print, in fact), it is my choice as the subject of the present article.

Throughout his career, Bing had always had a soft spot in his heart for the U.K. and his many British fans, but it wasn't until the 1970s that he began to record regularly in England. Such was the case with *Feels Good, Feels Right*, which was waxed at Decca's Studio Number 3 at Broadhurst Gardens, in London. As Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling mention in their 2014 book *Decca Studios and Klooks Kleek: West Hampstead's Musical Heritage Remembered*, trumpeter Henry Lowther, who took part in these sessions, was taken aback by Bing's professionalism: "Henry remembered how Bing wanted to be with the musicians as they played rather than be separated from them in a booth, which the engineers preferred for the recording." Crosby's old-fashioned work ethic, together with Alan Cohen's classic-sounding arrangements for most of the tracks, definitely lend the finished product an air of classiness that harks back to the crooner's great Decca sides of the 1930s and '40s. As noted in Colloms and Weindling's book about the London Decca studios, the producer of the sessions was Kevin Daly and the engineer was Martin Smith, and listening to the album more than forty years after it was made, there's very little doubt that Cohen was attempting to recreate Crosby's highly recognizable style, particularly on the charts he wrote for the older tunes selected.

Overall, there were three initial sessions on July 20-22, 1976, which yielded the bulk of the material, followed by a fourth one on August 17 that produced one song that made the cut ("What's New?"), as well as three extra tracks that didn't make it onto the original album ("That Old Black Magic," "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You," and "At Last") and would remain unissued until a few years later. As it first hit the stores in 1976, *Feels Good, Feels Right* contained twelve selections and was a mixture of nine standards and three more contemporary songs. The title track, written by Ken and Mitzi Welch, boasts a clever lyric, and even though the slightly rockish arrangement is hardly suited to Bing's

style, he sings it with excitement and aplomb, showing that he actually cares about the song. The other two newer tunes appear at the end of side A and at the start of side B: "The Way We Were" is a good reading of the 1973 Barbra Streisand hit that would have benefited from a subtler arrangement, while Lyn Duddy and Jerry Bresler's "There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About" is a very appropriate tribute to the wide variety of tunes that Crosby recorded throughout his stunning career, and it seems clear that Bing is having fun with the Dixieland-style chart.

Working with pianist Keith Nichols at the "Feels Good, Feels Right" sessions.

Now a septuagenarian, Bing sounds comfortable and is in good voice, yet he appears to be much more at ease on the older songs, which are mostly well-chosen standards with which he was very familiar. The majority of them, such as "Once in a While," "As Time Goes By," and "Time on My Hands," are time-honored ballads that suit his aged-in-the-wood baritone voice perfectly. He takes Harry Ruby and Bert Kalmar's "Nevertheless (I'm in Love with You)" at a slightly faster tempo and enjoys doing some ad-libbing here and there, and Cohen's beautiful arrangement even leaves room for a nice clarinet solo. "The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful" is set to a lilting Latin beat, and on James P. Johnson and Cecil Mack's "Old Fashioned Love," Crosby treads back into uptempo Dixieland territory as the track brings to mind the sound of his classic 1957 collaboration with Bob Scobey, *Bing with a Beat*. His pensive interpretation of Bob Haggart and Johnny Burke's "What's New?," which he had already recorded for Decca back in 1939, is undoubtedly one of the highlights of the album, and as producer Ken Barnes tells us in his book *The Crosby Years*, Bing's heartfelt rendition of Irving Berlin's "When I Leave the World Behind" was included at the behest of one of his fans, Mr. Bob Roberts, who, "shortly after the album was released, . . . became seriously ill and was told that he was dying. Bing's recording of this song was a great comfort to him in his final weeks." Crosby also decided to dig deep into the vast catalog of the Great American Songbook, unearthing a lovely forgotten song by Harry Warren and Al Dubin—"The Rose in Her Hair," originally written for *Broadway Gondolier*, an obscure 1935 Dick Powell-Joan Blondell film, and sung beautifully here by Bing to the soft strains of a delicate Cohen chart that features a nice harmonica solo.

Finally, the three unused tracks recorded at the August 17 session are all standards that in principle would have fit well with the rest of the album but that didn't find their way onto the finished LP. Bing's voice sounds good on all three, especially on the oft-recorded "At Last"—complete here with the verse—but the arrangements for "That Old Black Magic" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" are a little busy and overly dramatic, which perhaps may explain why they ended up being left out of the original release. These three tracks would later be included in the Decca double album *Bing—1931* and *Bing 1975-76*. Though *Feels Good, Feels Right* is a collection that was sure to please Crosby's long-time followers, not much seems to have been written about the album upon its release. In its January 29, 1977 issue, *Billboard* highlighted "Nevertheless" and "When I Leave the World Behind" as its best cuts and recognized that "for Crosby filberts . . . the LP will hit the mark." However, the rest of the brief anonymous review mostly dismissed the album thus: "The spirit's willing, but Bing's pipes aren't what they once were despite his choice of nine splendid standards and three more recent tunes recorded last summer in London. One must overlook faulty intonation, an inability to sustain notes and an overall feeling of fatigue in this program."

As one would expect, Bert Bishop's contemporary review for BING #44 strikes a much more positive note: Mr. Bishop praises Crosby for singing the verses of many of the ballads and goes on to assert that "Bing is singing better than he was, and this LP is as good an example as any to prove the point." Four years after the album's release, Ken Barnes is ambivalent in his appraisal of it in *The Crosby Years*. On the one hand he states that "the songs, for the most part, are well chosen and Bing is in pretty good voice on most of them," but on the other hand, he decries the fact that "in apparently aiming for a blend between the nostalgic and the contemporary markets, the album falls woefully short of target." On the brighter side, though, Barnes considers that some of the tracks on *Feels Good, Feels Right* "show the latter-day Bing at his best—and indeed they constitute enough reason for buying the album." In truth, it seems a little bit of an exaggeration to describe this LP as a blend between the nostalgic and the contemporary when we bear in mind that stylistically only two of the songs can be considered modern ("Feels Good, Feels

Right" and "The Way We Were"). The rest are standards sung in a markedly traditional manner, and even the tribute song, "There's Nothing That I Haven't Sung About," is written in a self-consciously retro-sounding style.

Crosby himself seemed to be rather pleased with the results of these sessions, and so he told Barnes, who also quotes Bing as saying, "Not everything turned out perfect. One or two songs had to be scrapped because they didn't quite come up to scratch." Crosby also discussed the album in passing in some of his personal letters that have survived. For instance, he wrote to British fan Arthur Blood in December 1976: "I like the *Feels Good, Feels Right* album very much, although I wish I had the chance to do the title song over again. They played it too slow, really. Dragged out the verse too long." He also mentions that he was using this song as the opening tune for his live shows and singing it faster, and a video recording of a 1977 show in Oslo, Norway, with jazz greats Joe Bushkin on piano, Johnny Smith on guitar, George Duvivier on bass, and Jake Hanna on drums, does bear this out. In an April 1977 missive to Club Crosby vice-president Priscilla Koenig, Bing calls the *Feels Good, Feels Right* project "the best I've done" and goes on to single out "The Night Is Young and You're So Beautiful" as "one of my favorite old songs."

Unfortunately, the fate of *Feels Good, Feels Right* in a digital format has been rather irregular. It was first released on CD by London Records in 1988, and the newest reissue, a Vocalion CD from 2004, has been long out of print and is currently difficult—not to mention quite expensive—to find. Thus, it remains one of the lesser-known efforts from Bing's prolific twilight period, very much in need of a new digital reissue that would restore this charming album to its rightful place in the Crosby canon.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez

(Editor: Many thanks, Anton. The background as to how the album came about is interesting. When Bing had recorded the spoken word, three-LP box-set, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" in 1975, our longstanding member, Geoff Milne, was the executive producer. While Bing was there, Geoff had snapped up his record, "Southern Memoir" for a UK release and this gave him the chance to produce a new Crosby record which turned out to be "Feels Good, Feels Right". An interview with Geoff some years later gave further details.)

"…Geoff says being in the studio with the singer was a memorable experience: "It wasn't just a job. It was exciting, in a way, listening to him. It's hard to explain, but he was a man who had been singing since 1926 and he was still going strong – he had an incredible track record.

"He went through a period in the 1960s when he sounded a little bit tired and the records didn't sound as good, but he seemed to recover from the early '70s onwards – there was a new timbre to his voice."

The first step was to decide which songs Crosby would record, with Geoff driving up to the singer's rented house at Holland Park to talk over possibilities. "We were going through all sorts of titles in the flat," he says. "He knew most of them, having probably sung them on the radio at one time or another. But I remember having to sing one of them for him, and him saying: 'That was very good – you ought to record it', very much tongue-in-cheek."

And Geoff did get a chance to croon in the studio, as Bing struggled with one particularly tricky melody line. "There was another song, either 'Rose in Her Hair' or 'Old Fashioned Love', where he couldn't get the melody quite right and had to be reminded of how it went," Geoff says.

"If you look on the back of the LP, there's a photo of me singing to him, because he couldn't get it right. Everybody found that very amusing. I suppose even the master professionals can have their weaknesses."

Geoff and Bing work on a song.

Mostly, though, Geoff was taken aback by just how easy Crosby found the process. "The actual recording didn't take very long," he says. "Myself and the studio producer Kevin Daly suggested titles and Bing usually went along with what we had to say.

"He could nail a song in the first go. If you did it again, it was just a safety, just to be sure. I often heard the first take and thought: 'How's he going to improve on that?'"

Geoff's favourite song from the record is the enchanting, dreamy closing number. "The song that stands out from those sessions is 'When I Leave the World Behind'," he says. "He liked that song; I remember when we talked about it. Al Jolson had made it famous and we thought: 'Hmm, is it the right sort of

material?', but Bing was convinced it was, and he was right."

Geoff says that while Bing was "practical" and "no mug", he had much in common with the happy-go-lucky persona he cultivated in films and on records. "He wasn't particularly interested in money," Geoff says. "We signed contracts with him for a very nominal amount. He was just happy to be working."

Still, it wasn't always easy for the singer to fit in studio time along with his other commitments. "Golf was more important to him than singing," Geoff says. "We were fixing duties for the studio and he would say: 'I shall be at the golf that day' – that always came first."

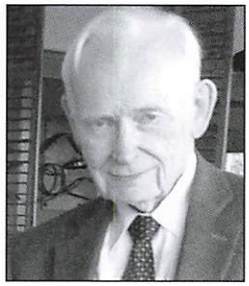
"'Feels Good, Feels Right' did quite well in sales," Geoff says. "Bing was in the middle of a resurgence of interest – people were saying his voice was even better than in the '50s. He was more relaxed. He had done a concert – two or three nights at the London Palladium, and that had sparked this big interest. By general consensus he was singing very well indeed."

Geoff remembers Crosby as "a very down-to-earth sort of man", matter-of-fact and unfailingly polite. "I remember while we were in my office, a West Indian waitress brought some drinks in, and he was up there like a shot to take the tray from her and thank her," he says.

"He was on his feet instantly, a man of his stature. I can think of many artists who wouldn't have moved." Though the company tried to keep Bing's visit quiet, word inevitably leaked out, with vast numbers of fans visiting the studio. "There are some who hate signing autographs, but Bing would sign anything," Geoff says.

"He said when people stopped asking for his autograph, that would be the time to worry. People were constantly knocking on the office doors, but he never refused them. That just shows what kind of a man he was.""

First-Hand: The Evolution of the Bing Crosby Radio Show



Our member Bob Phillips, who worked for Bing Crosby Enterprises in the early 1950s, has published a major article about Bing's radio career on the Engineering and Technology History Wiki site (http://ethw.org/First-Hand:The_Evolution_of_the_Bing_Crosby_Radio_Show) and he has kindly given us permission to publish this in the magazine. Bob acknowledges editorial comments by Wig Wiggins on the web site.

Introduction

Over the last several years people have asked me about my association with Bing Crosby and his radio show. One question stands out; it is about the editing of his taped programs. People have believed the radio shows were real audience performances that were taped for a later broadcast. However, they have observed the same song appearing on different radio programs and even on Decca recordings, and this repeating of material has caused confusion as to how the shows were produced. The real answer is that the radio show evolved over the years as the recording and editing processes improved. I addressed this issue in my First-Hand article, Bing Crosby and the Recording Revolution [1] on the Engineering and Technology History Wiki site, and my presentation to the annual International Club Crosby [2] meeting at Leeds, England in October 2014. However, since the production techniques were a key part of the radio show its evolution deserves a more detailed explanation.

Bing's Radio History

Bing Crosby's radio history covered three decades, and his radio years can be divided into the following major periods:

Early years began in September 1931 (multiple sponsors)

NBC Radio's "Kraft Music Hall" (1935-1946) - Bing decided no more live radio shows in 1945

ABC Radio's "Philco Radio Time" (1946-1949)

Beginning of recorded radio shows in October 1946

1946 season (1946-47)	Disk transcription
1947 season (1947-48)	Modified Magnetophon
1948 season (1948-49)	Ampex 200 Recorder (First Ampex 300 Spring 1949)

CBS Radio's "The Bing Crosby Show" (1949-1953)

Edit facility with three Ampex 300 recorders (Portable Ampex 200 to spring 1951)
1949, 1950 and 1951 seasons sponsored by Chesterfield
1952 and 1953 seasons sponsored by General Electric (ended in May 1954)

After the CBS Radio's "The Bing Crosby Show"

Star of CBS Radio's "The Bing Crosby Show" with Buddy Cole (1954-1956)
The Ford Road Show (1957-58)
The Bing Crosby-Rosemary Clooney Show (1960-62)

Each of these periods with their improved recording and editing capabilities permitted changes in the production of the Bing Crosby radio show.

The Early History

This evolution of recorded radio programs began when Bing decided in 1945 that doing live radio shows every week was too demanding on his schedule. He had been doing the "Kraft Music Hall" since 1935 on NBC, and the World War II years showed him that the transcription process that used disks for shows broadcast on the Armed Forces Radio Network provided a good alternative to live programs. This technology was developed by the record industry and used by radio programs. However, NBC on its Red Network had adopted the policy of only presenting live material. The transcription process was used for delayed broadcasts due to the time zones, but never for the original show.

In 1945 Bing requested that NBC record (transcribe) his show with this technology so that it could be broadcast at a later time. This process would allow him flexibility in his performance dates. However, when Kraft and NBC would not permit the prerecorded shows, Bing found a home with ABC (the old NBC Blue Network). The ABC Network was just developing and needed good talent like Bing.

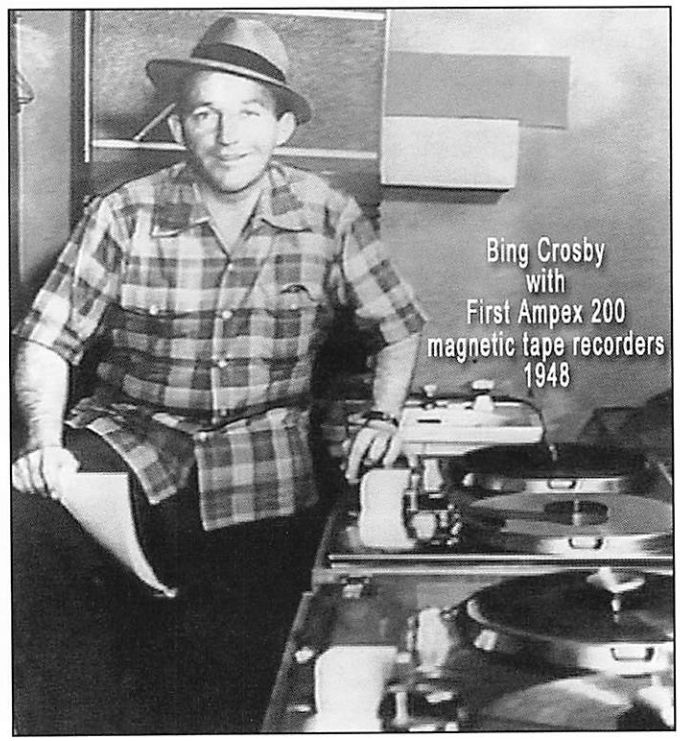
PRODUCED BY BING CROSBY ENTERPRISES, INC.
INSERT YOUR STATION CALL LETTERS HERE
Philco Radio Time
STARRING
BING CROSBY
NOT TO BE PLAYED BEFORE Mar. 3, 1948 OR AFTER Mar. 5, 1948
PROGRAM 23
PART 1 OF 3
START OUTSIDE 33 1/3 RPM
ORTHACOUSTIC HD8-MM-4592
USE STYLUS PRESSURE Not in excess of 2 oz.
IMPORTANT
This record is furnished to the station to which sent with the full understanding and agreement that it will be played for one broadcast ONLY and will be returned, prepaid, within 7 days after program date. It is also agreed that all program material on this record is the exclusive property of the producer. Pack carefully in original carton.
Send to Philco Advertising Stores,
Third and Westmoreland Sts.,
Philadelphia, Penn.
RECORDED BY AMERICAN BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.

Bing began with ABC in 1946 doing the 30 minute "Philco Radio Time" program in front of an audience, but it was transcribed on 16-inch lacquer disks for broadcast at its regular time. Bing was now free to adjust his schedule so long as the quality of the show was equal to a live radio show. Since a transcription disk could provide excellent quality, this requirement should not have been a problem. These disks have been used to record bandwidths as high as 100 khz, but the high frequencies fell-off rapidly with each play and the background noise increased. However, the Crosby show decided that improvements needed to be made in the program and began to edit it. This editing process required playing the disk and recording it a number of times. With each transfer of the material, the quality decreased to the point where ABC began to caution the show that they might have to return to live audience broadcasts. For one show over 40 disks were used to produce the final broadcast version.

During the 1946-47 season the producers, advertisers and ABC network executives had many uneasy moments when the final disks were played on the air. Bing also was not happy with the results, but none of them wanted to give up the editing process. However, by the beginning of the 1947-48 season it was decided that if the ratings of the show fell a few more points, the show would have to go to a live broadcast. A search had been going on since early 1947 for an acceptable recording medium, and just before the first show of the 1947 season was to be recorded, Jack Mullin and his modified Magnetophon tape recorders came to the attention of Murdo McKenzie, who was Bing's long time radio producer. Jack gave a presentation to Bing in August 1947, and he was hired to record the first audience show of the season on 10 August 1947. It was a success and was broadcast on 1 October. The "Philco Radio Time" program continued to be a tape recorded audience show for delayed broadcast for the rest of the season. There was one major difference; the show now could be edited without any loss in quality. Bing now had found his freedom.

The Introduction of Tape

There still was one major problem to be overcome. The replacement of the only two modified Magnetophon recorders that were aging and the magnetic tape for them that was rapidly deteriorating due to reuse. Ampex and 3M came to the rescue during the 1947-48 season. Two Ampex 200 recorders and 3M magnetic tape for them were delivered to Jack Mullin in April 1948.



The show still needed help in two other areas to allow for the new style into which the Crosby show was going to evolve. One came early in 1948 with the delivery of two "portable" Ampex 200 recorders to replace the original ones (serial numbers 1 and 2) that were in large studio cabinets. The show was now able to travel to other locations where Bing wanted to perform. The other area was the limitation that two recorders placed on the editing process. No dubbing from two different sources could be done. Editing was just limited to cut and paste of the recorded show material. The arrival of the first Ampex 300 recorder in the later part of the 1948 season (1949) now permitted this dubbing to take place as well.

The Evolution

Beginning with the transcription disk process that started in 1946, the editing process for the radio show began to evolve. No one had transcribed and then edited radio shows until Bing decided not to do live broadcasts. The team behind Bing also grew in their ability to adapt the record medium for the radio show. Bill Morrow wrote the show and Murdo McKenzie oversaw its production. When Jack Mullin arrived with his modified Magnetophon tape recorders, he was the third member to join the team that was guided by Bing. Bing trusted these people and did not interfere with the product they put together, but he always was in the background encouraging them.

The basic recording process started as an audience show with closed sessions (or rehearsals) using transcription disks. The finished product was an audience radio show with edits that replaced an audience segment with one from the closed session if the audience recording was not as good. It also included editing out offending comments and revising parts needed to bring the show to its assigned time of 30 minutes. Once magnetic tape arrived the editing process became more robust, but the basic material for the ABC Philco years came from the show done before a live audience.

The editing process until the end of the 1948-49 season was still a cut and paste operation. However, at times a segue or fade would be tried. This process involved making a long (6 to 8 inches) diagonal cut along the tape. It was difficult to do and made the tape subject to breakage. Another complex edit took place when Truman won the 1948 election. The show was recorded before the election, and Bing said that Dewey had won. This had to be changed, but there was no recorded reference to Truman and Bing was gone! Jack Mullin was able to put together "Truman" from various syllables of Bing's recorded comments to create the missing name. All these edits were of the cut and paste type. The last addition was the beginning of the audience reaction file that grew to include 42 different cuts.

With the start of the 1949-50 season the Crosby show (now on CBS for Chesterfield) moved down Sunset Boulevard to CBS Columbia Square. The show was given its own office and record/edit spaces on the second floor in the east wing of the building. The Crosby show now was a tight knit operation all in one location. The main feature of these facilities was the editing space with its three new Ampex 300 recorders. Jack Mullin designed and built a mixing panel with equalization controls and a control system for keeping the recorder speeds the same. When in Hollywood, the audience show was usually held in the CBS theater at 1615 Vine Street just north of Hollywood Boulevard. The 970 seat theater had a reputation for fine acoustics and sightlines and had been used by CBS for many years. Recording sessions without an audience also were done there when it did not interfere with other shows that used the theater; otherwise they were held in one of the CBS Columbia Square studios.

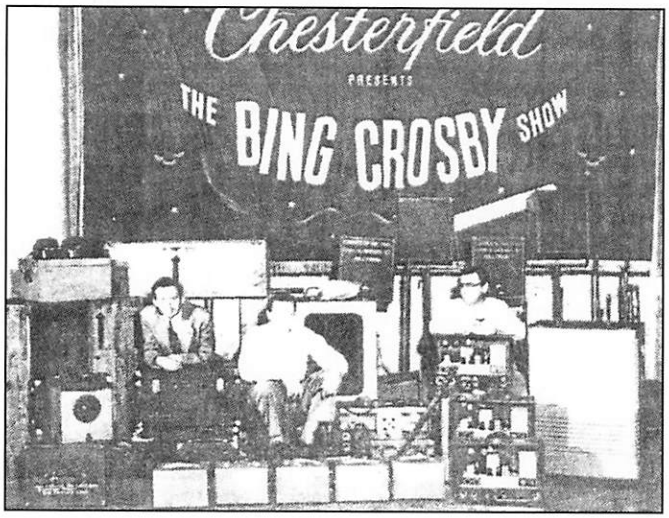
Over time each recording session began to address more than one radio show. The closed sessions were all day long and usually ended with a show before a live audience that lasted about an hour. The audience session was able to generate material for at least two or three 30 minute radio programs. Bill Morrow wrote the segments to be recorded for multiple shows, and Jack Mullin figured out how to put them together. Murdo McKenzie, the perfectionist, had the job of making sure it all worked to the satisfaction of Bing.

Bing's "Live" Broadcasts (for CBS)

During the last five seasons on CBS the radio show evolved once more from the cut and paste operation into one that was created from many different recording sessions. It again was new territory being explored by the Crosby team. By the time the CBS facilities were set up, the show had a library of past recordings indexed and cross referenced by artists, songs, etc. This collection permitted songs to be used from past radio shows and recording sessions, which reduced the time of a recording session needed for a single new radio show. However, as the sessions became less frequent at times they lasted for more than one day. These sessions produced enough material for several different radio shows and were held when it was convenient for Bing's schedule.

A recording session was closed without any public audience participation. They involved only Bing, guests, the musicians and announcer. Both music and dialogue were recorded during these sessions for use in the radio broadcasts that followed. During his Chesterfield and General Electric years at CBS, Bing did continue to perform shows before live audiences. An example is the Bing and Louis Armstrong and his All Stars at the Marine Auditorium in San Francisco in 1950 and 1951. There was little editing of these shows. The extended periods between the sessions also helped the show when it traveled; giving it more time to move the equipment

and get it set up. However, the same day long recording session in addition to the live audience show also was used when the show was on the road.



This poor image shows Jack Mullin, Murdo MacKenzie and Norn Dewes (L-R) from around 1950, in front of the equipment that was taken on the road. The equipment consisted of two Ampex portable 200 recorders behind Mullin, RCA remote mixers and microphones, amplifiers and speakers.

The material from the recording sessions and shows would then be edited into a 30 minute radio program. This edited program would consist of segments from the closed and audience sessions augmented by audience reactions from the tape library.

More Sophisticated Editing

Starting with the 1949-50 season until the end of the General Electric radio show in 1954 most of the shows involved assembling to some degree. There were many parts to an assembled show. While the basic structure of the show may have been done during an audience part of the recording session, the songs were from different sources. If there were past recordings of a guest artist or Bing, it would be very likely that one of the songs would be from the earlier show that featured that guest artist.

Since there could be a week or two from the recording session until a radio show was broadcast, the exchanges between people had to be updated. It was particularly true of the exchanges between Bing and Ken Carpenter, the announcer. Ken would be recorded at the CBS studio, but one had to go to where Bing was located. Sometimes it meant driving to his ranch at Elko, Nevada and having him do his part there. Sometimes a recording of Bing or the guest would be sent in from a distant location if required.

Each radio show would go through several edit sessions with the last one a week before its broadcast. The shows would be put together using the editing guide, and each piece of tape would be numbered. Even the audience reactions were identified. This part also included putting together exchanges between Bing and Ken Carpenter or the guest that were recorded in different locations. These different pieces of tape had to be corrected for acoustics and pitch if required. The pitch correction was done by slowing one tape and speeding up the other. Once the match was made the speed was slowly normalized. The last part of the editing process was to cut it to the broadcast time and adding the audience reactions. The reactions included many different types from full applause to groans. There were even stage and orchestra sounds added at times when these sounds would normally occur in a live production. It was an artistic effort.

Once the editing process was finished the master edit tape was dubbed for backup, and both tapes were then sent to the network for broadcast. Jack Mullin was a perfectionist when it came to the show. It was very difficult to tell where the edits were made even when a person was told the locations. He also instilled this perfection in the people he trained to replace him. Many people have detected the same song appearing in different radio shows, which was due to the reuse of past recordings. A number of the recordings also were transferred to Decca for making records. These recordings also have been identified with ones from the radio programs.

Bill Morrow now had to write several shows at a time along with an editing guide for putting each show together. By the time Jack Mullin left the show in June 1951, it was a smooth running operation; he had worked out a process with Bill, Murdo and Bing to allow for the recording of material for multiple radio shows in one session. These four men wrote the book for editing programs that is still in use today even though the editing is done digitally.

A New Era

At the end of the General Electric broadcast season on CBS in the spring of 1954, Bing decided to end his long running radio program. He dismissed his large orchestra and much of the staff involved in its production. He turned to doing short broadcasts (usually fifteen minutes long) with Buddy Cole and guests. In the end his main guest was Rosemary Clooney, and they did parts of the show usually in her home. These programs were more jazzy in content and used record over techniques developed by Bing's friend Les Paul. The music was recorded in a studio, and the radio programs were assembled much like the editing used during the years of the General Electric Show.

Epilog

The radio and recording industry owes much to the evolution of the Bing Crosby radio show between 1947 and 1954. Bing through his desire to be free of the burden of a live radio show, caused a revolution in radio programming that carried over into television. It also

changed how records were produced. Jack Mullin encouraged by Bing created the editing process. Bill Morrow was able to see the potential for the edited radio show, and Murdo McKenzie made it all happen.

Robert R. Phillips

(Editor: It's fascinating to read an article by a man who was actually there at the time as these recording techniques were gradually being developed. Many thanks Bob for providing this detailed background information.)

An Idyll for Knickerbockers

Martin McQuade discovers a true Crosby enthusiast.

Once again during a weekend in early June the infectiously buoyant sounds of twenties and thirties jazz cascaded throughout Governors' Island, spearheaded by the Dreamland Orchestra, which maestro Michael Arenella elegantly conducts. For twelve years now he has conjured for throngs of Knickerbockers a fantasy land which emerges, Brigadoon-like, on the fabled plot of land which dots the exclamation point of Manhattan. Flappers and sheiks of all ages in period dress partake of "The Jazz Age Lawn Party", eager to enjoy Michael's fastidious recreations of vintage big band arrangements. In particular, Paul Whiteman's recordings of "Coquette" and "I'm Coming Virginia," which Michael informatively introduced and caressingly crooned, thrilled the many Bing fans whom this fellow traveler encountered.

Making this excursion particularly noteworthy was the participation of one extraordinary Bing fan, an incendiary musician named Drew Nugent. Drew performed with his Midnight Society Ensemble on a bandstand apart from the main stage. This Philadelphian virtuoso cast "The Spell of the Blues" in a manner that reinforced the sensuous insinuation of this raw-edged Crosby classic. A vocalist with mastery of piano, trumpet and teakettle, (shades of the Mound City Blue Blowers) Drew specializes in the traditional/"hot" jazz styles of the 1920's. He has led his band for ten years, drawing inspiration from a variety of sources: Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Red Nichols, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Cliff Edwards. There is one titan that enthralls Drew more than all the rest; one for whom he eloquently expressed his deep and abiding debt during a freewheeling phone conversation.

I looked up to Bing when I was growing up. He had a unique presence. My earliest encounter with Bing was The Legend of Sleepy Hollow. That's where I became aware of the swagger in Bing's voice. The way that he talked, he kind of made you feel like one of the guys in a very debonair way. Later on I loved watching Bing and Louis Armstrong mesh together in High Society. I always loved Bing no matter what he did, but I do prefer the early Bing. With Bing, there was always consistency. His voice never failed him, he aged with grace, and he took everything on the chin. He gave so many people a push along the way and influenced so many. The mystery of him is crazy. We all have this idea of what Bing Crosby was. We know him from White Christmas and Holiday Inn. In my opinion, there is a mystery about him that we have yet to uncover. This was sort of his own doing. He made it a little bit smoke and mirrors so people really didn't know what was going on. He is a beautifully mysterious character.

Layering to the enigma for Drew is the transformation that Bing's voice underwent in the mid-thirties.

After Eddie Lang died, you hear his voice change, for instance, you hear this on "Moonburn." I would love to have heard the way his voice would have developed had Eddie not died. In my opinion, Bing's career would have been completely different. Eddie would have surpassed Django Reinhardt. Eddie would have been the champion breadwinner prizeman of guitar playing in Philadelphia, let alone the world. As much as they were neck and neck and pretty much tied, Bing would have downright trumped Sinatra's ace if Eddie had not died. Bing and Sinatra went different directions. It will always be Bing over Frank as far as I'm concerned.

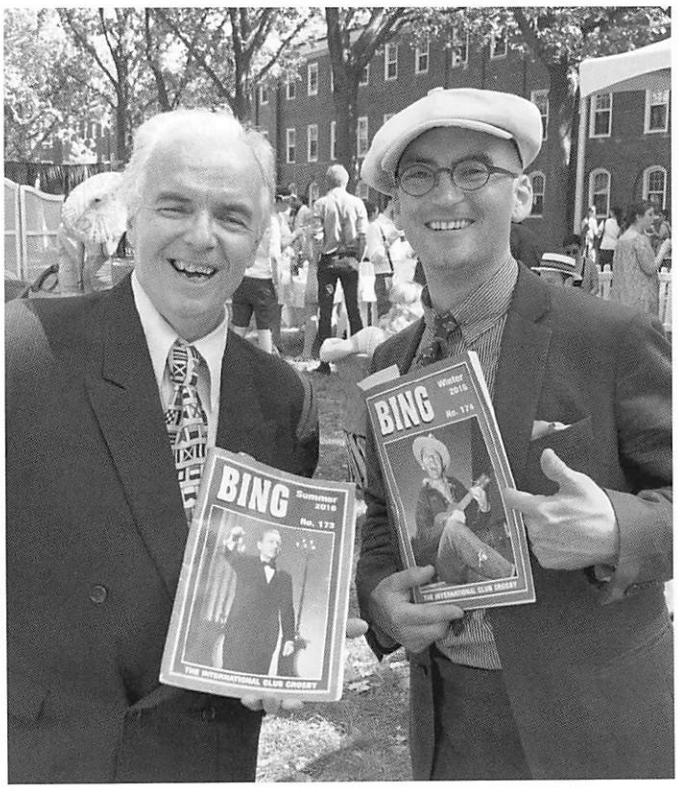
A passion for Bing glowed as Drew continued to expand on his idol in his jaunty and picturesque vernacular.

On screen, his manners match the swagger of his voice. When Bing walked into a room, it was sort of like The Prince of Wales had just walked in! He's humble and

unassuming, never pointing his chin out. He's there, almost floating. When you saw him move and speak and sing, it was literally like everything belonged right where it was, and nothing needed to be touched. His voice had so much texture.

As our stimulating colloquy continued, the unavoidable impression ensued that this young man is the reincarnation of the era when Bing's meteor first took off.

I'm a man of the twenties and thirties, so Red McKenzie and Cliff Edwards, and most especially Bing, are my favorites singers. My voice almost comes in as a weird hybrid of their styles. I don't know how that is even possible, but it is. Chick Bullock is another favorite from that era. There were so many vocalists back in the day, but there was no Bing Crosby yet. As Artie Shaw said, "Bing was the first cool white man in America." A lot of early singers were operatic, or almost crooning, guys like Gene Austin or Whispering Jack Smith. They were mellow and sweet, and wonderfully pleasing to the ear. You didn't have anything swinging yet, not in the sense that Bing was doing. None could cut the meat like Bing Crosby could. He was something new, a baritone, when most of the singers were tenors or falsettos. Baritones at the time were not lead singers in the twenties. It never mattered that I never met Bing in person. He was my friend. That's always what his voice was to me.



Martin (left) with Drew Nugent.

Drew's path was set almost from the beginning, as he explained.

I was raised with music. My parents always wanted to have instruments in the house should we ever have the urge to play them. I studied the piano initially. When I was ten or eleven I first heard ragtime. I got all the ragtime piano sheet music, especially the Scott Joplin songbook. When I was fourteen, Ken Burn's jazz series came out. By this time I became proficient in syncopating rhythm. Then I became acquainted with the records of Bix Beiderbecke, Louis Armstrong, and Paul Whiteman. I loved "There Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears" with Bix and Bing and Frankie Trumbauer. I was amazed to learn that was Bing on that record! I went ballistic. As much as I grew up with be-bop and straight-ahead jazz from the forties and fifties on, it had run its course of welcome in my palette. I appreciate and respect it, but I love the hot stuff from the teens to the mid-thirties, even the swing era. Those artists made their way into my heart and never left. I'm really glad they decided to stay. They're my longest visitors. This music I love is crazy and has so much emotion, progression, tension, relief and climax. It's a movement. So much of human existence is taped in these old records. Not just the words and music, but there is the energy coming off it. They were made right for that moment, right for that take. If you stopped recording during that take, you pissed off some engineers! You just wasted a whole piece of shellac. We have to thank Bing for starting, stopping, and overdubbing.

A fondness for the rich musical heritage of his native Philadelphia came to the fore as Drew wistfully echoed folklore about Eddie Lang and Joe Venuti.

Eddie and Joe in the early evening would play the guitar and violin and go to the fire halls and police halls. The whole neighborhood would lean their heads out the windows. They would be playing anything from tarantellas and waltzes, from operas to ragtime. Whatever anybody wanted to hear. They came up with most of their riffs, transitions, licks, interludes, intros, outros, as well as a major portion of their original works and jams in South Philly between 1919-21.

What might be Drew's favorite Crosby recording? Certainly the answer would be an early chestnut. He startled me with his answer.

I love "I Love You Samantha" with the harps, the winds and lush violins. It's an example of the magnificent song writing hand of Cole Porter. When Porter writes a song, Porter writes a song! Bing just acted the whole sequence in High Society absolutely spot onto perfection, adjusting his tie and blue of the night through the window while he sings to Samantha out into the evening. I get choked up every time. In addition, Louis Armstrong's lilting trumpet fills in the background. The whole scene and sequence drives me to tears every time. Music is funny like that.

Subsequent to this choice, which certainly reveals an expansive appreciation, Drew cited selections from his preferred decades.

"What Are You Waiting For, Mary," "Susianna" and "From Monday On" are early favorites, as are "Dinah" and "Shine." Bing was the best scat singer, like a tommy

gun going off. While scat singing in The Big Broadcast, he rarely even opens his mouth. He's frowning, almost. It's so relaxed. It's ever so soft, then it's boom, off to the races and there is no turning back. Every time I scat, I'm literally hearing him. Bing really challenged me to learn how to scat. Bing has no intonation flaw. He is in the class of the Olympians. He shares it with Louis Armstrong, Fats Waller, Joe Venuti, Eddie Lang, and James P. Johnson. They never made a mistake. They're the best. He was blood and flesh, a real person, your friend.

Our time together concluded with a display of Drew's protective regard for his friend.

What really drives me bonkers is how many people still want to carry on these rumors about him. Cut the guy a break. A, you weren't there. B, you weren't there, and C, you weren't there. How the hell do you know?

The Dreamland Orchestra will return to Governors' Island to weave its magic come the weekend of August 26/27, and Drew and his Midnight Society Band cohorts will once again be authentically spreading "The Spell of the Blues", overlaid with his spiritual enthusiasm for Bing Crosby.

Also, take heed of his new CD, *I'll Never Be the Same,* which derives its name from a song credited to Matty Malneck, Bing's Whiteman band colleague. Visit www.drewnugent.net for further intriguing details of a zealous Crosby missionary.

Martin McQuade

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Roger Addey, 17 Tehidy Gardens, Camborne, Cornwall, TR14 0ET, UK (Tel. 01209-718326)

Roger needs to slim down his Crosby collection and as a first step he would like to pass on a number of books, videos and LPs to ICC members. The books include "Call Me Lucky", "The Crosby Years" by Ken Barnes and many more. Amongst the LPs are "Bing and the Music Maids", "Feels Good, Feels Right", "That's What Life Is All About", the 2-album Palladium set, and "The Great Country Hits". The videos include "The Magic of Bing Crosby", "Bing at Sennett", "Riding High" and "Two for Tonight".

All items in excellent quality. Roger does not want payment for any of the items but would appreciate members covering postage costs. Contact Roger direct.

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's latest book "The Golden Years of Entertainment" is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. Write to Gord direct. See his column later in this issue for an excerpt.

John Bassett, "Bingville", 15 Oast Way, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RZ, UK

"Alternate Bing Crosby – Vol. 2". Issued as a companion volume to Colin Pugh's invaluable 1988 publication (still available from the ICC), this 67-page edition continues the story by examining every alternate Take discovered since that first edition. In total, 131 titles are dealt with in this A4 size publication, currently available at £7.50 (including postage). All remittances in £ sterling should be made payable to John Bassett and sent to him at the address above.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com – website: www.fesfilms.com/)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your NTSC requirements for Bing on DVD. They also have thousands of Public Domain films and TV shows. Films are sold on DVD-R and Mpeg2 video file formats.

Crosby Clubs Around the World

The ICC is very pleased to be associated with the Australian Bing Crosby Society. The society's details are:

The Australian Bing Crosby Society

Peter De Ryk, 11 Holden Rd., Kallista, Victoria 3791, Australia (tel. [03] 9755 3013 – email: deryk@net2000.com.au)

The Society celebrates its 40th anniversary in August this year. Bi-monthly newsletters are issued and there are regular film nights. In April, the film night featured *Dr. Cook's Garden* plus two Mack Sennett shorts *Dream House* and *Billboard Girl*. The June film show had *Here Is My Heart* as the main attraction with *The Men Who Made the Movies: Vincente Minnelli* as the support feature plus a 1934 newsreel. Future film nights are planned for August 15, October 17 and December 11. The venue is the Library behind the Collingwood Town Hall complex at 11 Stanton St., Abbotsford, Melbourne.

Internet sites:

BING magazine

This site contains a considerable amount of reference material including Lionel Pairpoint's marvellous radio book, Frans van der Kolff's incredible "Songography", Keith Parkinson's magnificent "The A-Z of Bing's Movies" and your editor's book "Bing Crosby – Day by Day". The Bing Crosby Discography originally created by Richard Baker and now maintained by David

Currington is on the site too. All of these are being updated as new information arises. Since the site was redesigned some years ago by Howard Crossland, it has been visited no less than 39,785 times. (The figure was 38,683 four months ago so it's encouraging to see that people are making use of it.)

See www.bingmagazine.co.uk

www.BingCrosby.com

This comes under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner and contains a mass of information plus some excellent audio and video vaults which contain much rare material. And of course there's Crosby Internet Radio too!

Bing Crosby on Facebook

This also comes under the auspices of Bing Crosby Enterprises and Bing's Facebook page is at:

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby/44544738326

Daily entries are made and the number of people who have "liked" the site now stands at 272,637.

Bing Crosby House

www.facebook.com/pages/Bing-Crosby-House/296302530555116

Rare items from Gonzaga's collection are frequently displayed and it's well worth a look. Grace Muljadi, a junior history major at Gonzaga University, manages the page. 606 likes.

Bing Crosby on Twitter

See www.twitter.com/Bingconstantly for this site which has lots of useful tweets and has 7527 followers now. @Bing_Crosby is still the place to go for Bing Crosby Inc. There are 4462 followers as we go to press.

Harry Lillis "Bing" Crosby—"The Old Groaner"—The Bing Crosby Fan Page

Administered by Bud Lehn, this Facebook group now has 487 members. Plenty of entries being posted. Our member Dave Richards often puts up lyrics from Crosby songs and challenges members of the group to name the song. It's one of those things that tests you until you can remember what the answer is.

Jack Boyle's "Bing for the Seasons - the music of Bing Crosby" has a page on Facebook too. There are 803 likes at present.

The Early Bing Crosby 1926-1936

This Facebook group is administered by Mike Pearl a retired crime reporter living in Georgia. The group statement is "Before he became overwhelmingly commercial and tried to be too many things for too many people, Bing was truly in a class by himself." There are 330 members.

Crosby Fan World

This bulletin board type site is at:
http://crosbyfanworld.boardhost.com/
Mature and knowledgeable contributions are being made and the site is sensibly moderated by Richard Baker. If you have any Bing news please consider making an entry on the site and if there are any Crosby matters you want to discuss, this is an ideal place to do so

Jon Oye's Blog

ICC stalwart Jon has his own first-class blog with several pages about Bing showing many rare items from his collection. Go to: http://derbingle.blogspot.com/

The Bing Crosby News Archive

David Lobosco runs this blog which has news and many stories about Bing at http://bingfan03.blogspot.co.uk/

The Late John Marshall's Compilations

John's excellent 'A Night At The Movies', 'Bing - The Written Word' and 'Footloose Follies' with their many clips of Bing can still be best be found by using Google as your search engine. As in *internet archive creator john c. marshall* (N. B. It won't work with other search engines, it has to be Google.)

Steven Lewis' Bing Crosby Internet Museum

Steven has put up some of the useful reference material he collected when the discussion board was active. See *http://www.stevenlewis.info/crosby/*

Have you seen

Memory Lane

the acclaimed quarterly magazine for lovers of 1920s, 1930s and 1940s music? Although the emphasis is on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, Memory Lane also covers the American bands, jazz, variety, etc. Al Bowlly - Britain's favourite vocalist is regularly featured.

Memory Lane is quality printed, fully illustrated and nicely presented with articles, CD reviews, Readers Letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A "must" for 78 RPM collectors.

Memory Lane also issues CDs mainly of British dance bands and vocalists, DVDs, runs guided walks in central London identifying the locations where the bands used to play, etc. and hosts nostalgic events in London.

Initial annual subscription only £10 (UK) or £15 (overseas) for readers of BING magazine. (Normal price £15 - UK, £20 - overseas.) Please send cheque payable to "Memory Lane" to

Memory Lane, P O Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England.

Or visit our web site - www.memorylane.org.uk where you can pay on-line.

OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com, website: www.flias.com/)

A magazine called *Laine Lines* is published three times a year.

International Al Jolson Society, c/o Sandra K. Gerloff, 419 Glenwood Drive, Douglassville, PA 19518, USA (website: www.jolson.org - also on Facebook)

A different Jolson radio show can be heard via the web site each week.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, email: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs. Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-899771, www.sinatramusicsociety.com/).

A quarterly magazine called *Perfectly Frank* is issued. Fees within the UK are £15 a year; £19 for European membership and £23 for the rest of the world.

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 003531 8212418).

Meetings now take place at 8:00 pm, second Monday of every month in the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, Dublin.

Books 'n' Bing

In Such Good Company: Eleven Years of Laughter, Mayhem, and Fun in the Sandbox by Carol Burnett, published by Crown Archetype ISBN-10: 1101904658, ISBN-13: 978-1101904657.

Martin McQuade takes a look at this new book.

Carol Burnett, another legend who appeared with Bing on TV, has written a memoir entitled *In Such Good Company: Eleven Years of Laughter, Mayhem, and Fun in the Sandbox* and in a chapter headed, "More Special Memories About Some Other Amazing Guest Stars," Carol rhapsodizes over her co-star.

"What can I say about Bing? Wow! My grandmother and I were usually first in line whenever a Bing Crosby movie (with or without Bob Hope) was showing at our neighborhood theater. He had a cool demeanor that was very attractive to me, even as a kid, and he was a natural-born actor. I got to know him when we swapped appearances on our television shows. He was on my show twice, and I did a couple of his specials.

In one of the sketches on our show I played a starstruck waitress, and when Bing and his manager (Harvey Korman) sit at one of her tables, she goes ape. Totally obnoxious, she badgers Bing into giving her his autograph, forcing Harvey to take a picture of her with Bing, wrapping Bing's arms around her, etc., etc., and finally ignoring Bing when she spots "a bigger star" coming into the restaurant! Enter Bob Hope!

We had been hiding Bob backstage in a dressing room during the show until it was time for his walk-on. The audience went wild, and Bing's jaw dropped. It was a complete surprise and he was delighted.

After the sketch, Bing and Bob kidded around for the audience, trading insults, with the cameras still rolling.

Bob: "I've just been looking around for work, and I'm glad you found some. It's nice to see you on your feet. You look wonderful, you really do." (Caressing Bing's cheek) "You just come right from the plasterers?" (Referring to Bing's jacket) "Very nice…these are coming back, y'know. Do you like my suit? I had this made for me in Glendale."

Bing: Where were *you* at the time?

As I said before. I couldn't read music, so I would listen to our special material writers sing the medleys and original numbers on tape every week in order to learn the vocals. Both times he was on, we sent a tape to Bing, who also didn't read music, and he would show up for rehearsals "note perfect." He only had to hear it *once.* And some of the medleys we did were pretty complicated! What you saw on the screen was exactly what he was. Mellow, laid-back, and a real class act."

Martin McQuade

The Road Begins

Bruce K. Hanson, author of *For the Record: Confessions of a Vinyl-Soundtrack Junkie* and *Peter Pan on Stage and Screen* remembers how he became a fan.

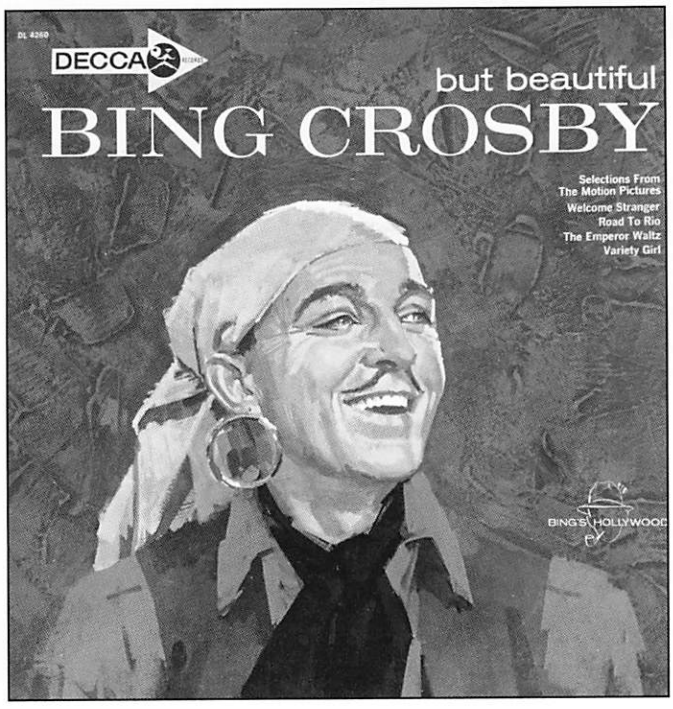
Although I had enjoyed the films and recordings of Bing Crosby while growing up in the late sixties and early seventies, I would not exactly have referred to myself as a Bing Crosby fan. True, I waited each year with great anticipation to watch *Holiday Inn* and *White Christmas* every Christmas season but that was about as far as my interest in Crosby extended. I remember calling a local New York television station when I was about fourteen years old to complain about the editing of *Holiday Inn* that year. The "Abraham" song was cut and while I understood the station's desire to be respectful of African Americans who would be outraged by Crosby and Marjorie Reynolds performing in blackface in that musical number, I still felt it wrong to edit a classic film (or for that matter, history) by omitting the number. A few years later it was reinserted and has been included in

the various video formats over the years.

My attitude towards Crosby changed when I viewed the 1944 film, *Here Come the Waves*, co-starring Betty Hutton. While Hutton served as the initial impetus for watching the film, it was the Johnny Mercer/Harold Arlen score and Bing's interpretations of their songs in the film soundtrack that heightened my appreciation for the singer. Soon after, I was looking ahead in my TV Guides to see what other Crosby films were being aired. As many of these films were scheduled to play after my bedtime, I would sneak downstairs when my parents and brothers were asleep and record the films on my cassette recorder, setting up the microphone close to the television speaker. Among my favorite films were (and still are) *The Country Girl*, *Going My Way*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *Welcome Stranger*, *The Emperor Waltz*, *High Society*, and the Road pictures with Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour. For Christmas I asked my parents for soundtrack records featuring Bing but at that time, the only readily available album was the soundtrack to *High Society* in the awful simulated stereo form. Still, it was a treasure!

At thirteen, I delivered the New York Daily News on my bicycle in Brooklyn which afforded me to buy a record or two a month. One of my favorite record stores was in Manhattan's Greenwich Village where they sold second hand albums for only a dollar apiece. On a Saturday excursion with my friends, John and Phillip, I found a Bing Crosby LP with a rather strange looking cover—a painting of the crooner dressed as a pirate. It immediately reminded me of Halloween years before, when, at the age of five, my mother dressed me as a pirate captain and my younger brother as my moll. I hated that costume as understandably did my brother. Still, even with these negative connotations, I turned over the album cover to read the selection of songs. Two in particular interested me: "You Don't Have to Know the Language" and "Apalachicola, FLA," both with the Andrews Sisters. Looking at the liner notes more carefully, I realized that these songs were from the Hope/Crosby film, *Road to Rio*. More importantly, the album, *But Beautiful*, was part of a series of Crosby albums issued by Decca titled *Bing's Hollywood*. Best of all, the liner notes included a complete list of the series including "Accentuate the Positive" which was from *Here Come the Waves*.

I bought the album and on the subway trip home I studied the liner notes as if I was cramming for an exam. When I finally arrived home I had to wait until after dinner to place the new platter on my record player. It wasn't until I looked at the record more carefully under the light of my bedroom lamp that I noticed it was in really bad shape. I crossed my fingers that it wouldn't skip or make pop sounds too loud to appreciate the recordings. Well, I was half lucky with this one; it didn't skip but it certainly was one of the noisiest record albums in my collection. Still, *But Beautiful* remained one of my most played albums during my youth. I looked in vain for a better copy as well as any of the other albums in the *Bing's Hollywood* series.



Many years later, I took an excursion to a record shop in Boonton, New Jersey, that specialized in out of print records—LP and 78s. I remember it was quite difficult to browse through their vast collection with my infant son Drew strapped on my back so I only was able to pick out three albums: An *Alice in Wonderland* LP with Jane Powell, the soundtrack to *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* from England, and, most remarkably, a 78 rpm Decca album of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. The Crosby songs include "If You Stub Your Toe On the Moon" and "Once and for Always" but just as delightful are "Busy Doing Nothing" sung by Crosby with William Bendix and Sir Cedric Hardwicke; a duet of "Once and for Always" with Rhonda Fleming; a solo by Fleming of "When is Sometime"; and a most unlikely candidate for a recording, "'Twixt Myself and Me," sung by Murvyn Vye as the evil sorcerer Merlin. At the time, I still did not own any of the other records of *Bing's Hollywood*. Yes, there were beat up copies I had encountered over the years but I was persistent in avoiding purchasing poor sounding records.

Finally, with the emergence of the internet, and particularly eBay, used copies of *Bing's Hollywood* were surfacing but at astronomical prices. I decided to wait it out until sealed or pristine albums would appear. Eureka! My patience paid off. In 2002, while surfing the net I found an entire set of fifteen albums on eBay with a starting bid of $200. And the vinyl and album covers were described as pristine - mint. I read on. The seller had bought them in a thrift store that were donated by Milt Gabler's widow, Estelle Gabler. *Wait a minute! Milt Gabler! He was the owner of Commodore records who also was a producer with Decca Records.* He was also

responsible for producing Billie Holliday's "Strange Fruit" on the Commodore label as well as producing records for other major artists on Decca including the Andrews Sisters, Bill Haley and the Comets, and, of course, Bing Crosby.

I looked at the eBay description again. If the provenance wasn't enough, all of the records were promotional copies with the pink Decca labels. And all new! Although the idea of shelling out $200 at once for a group of records was not appealing, I reminded myself that the cost was only $13.33 per album; each vinyl was in mint condition. I decided to bid up to $251.99. *What the hell! I have waited over thirty years to find these records. I deserve to own them.* However, it wasn't until the last five minutes of the auction that I bid not wanting to give any competitors time to see how much I was willing to spend.

I won the albums for the initial $200 and they arrived about a week later. Indeed, they were as perfect as described. And the album covers, each with a portrait painting of Bing from the various films represented, were a stunning. The only fault with *Bing's Hollywood* is that many of the songs by the other artists that were included in the original 78 rpm releases are not part of the series. Yes, Fred Astaire and Peggy Lee warranted their solos but Jane Wyman, Rhonda Fleming, and Murvyn Vye were not included. This is understandable as the series is called *Bing's Hollywood*. Perhaps someday, a record producer might reissue all of the albums featured in the series with all of the songs intact. MCA started the process a few years ago with CD releases of Holiday Inn and Blue Skies but they did not sell well. Those CDs were rather generic in appearance with no liner notes. Certainly the legacy of Bing Crosby deserves more. As for me, I enjoy the thought that I am part of that legacy by owning and playing Milton Gabler's records.

Bruce K. Hanson

Not a Christmas story

Frank Startup sent me a story by Ali Smith in the December 2016 / January 2017 edition of the *New Statesman*. I won't reproduce it all but the Bing 'n' Bowie duet runs through it and here are a few extracts

…On my way to work a Christmas song is blaring out of Poundland. It's the one with Bing Crosby and David Bowie singing it together. Bowie dead and gone but here he is anyway up the High Street, and I never much liked this song, always made me think of the Thomas Hardy poem where Hodge the drummer boy of a long-ago war is tipped into a grave uncoffined, dead, young, nothing above him now but strange-eyed constellations. Poor Hodge. He could have done with Bowie, the laureate of seeing strangely, knowing our own strangeness, the man who made us all strange but true, whose Laughing Gnome film, when it was shown on Top of the Pops, was so wild and colourful and zany and unhomely that it had made a girl at your school's mother have an epileptic fit and have to be taken to the hospital; Bowie, whose zigzag across his face had somehow made my own street, every suburban street, be other colours, be full of unknown possibilities; whose song about the girl with the mousy hair going to the cinema had - as if the dusty thick old ruched theatre curtain down over all our eyes had simply risen - let us see where we really were.

I'd forgotten that Bowie had ever recorded that song, and with Bing Crosby of all people. It tips me back, walking to work this morning in December, into the time when I was breaking up with my first love, Christmas 1982, the air cold and fresh, the roofs of the city we lived in back then white with blackening thaw-marks round the chimneys…

Bowie and Bing singing come they told me pa-rum-pa-pum-pum, along with that other song, the guy who owned the shop played it all the time, Horse with No Name by America. I didn't like the Bowie/Crosby; I liked it even less for having to hear it constantly when I was unhappy, though that America track, already an oldie by 1982, was a song that had made us both agree, even made us a bit proud - in a rare moment, a little crack of light, crack in the foul linoleum, through which we were still able to be civil to each other, I mean between her ripping the last pages out of all my books (the worst thing she could think to do to me) and me doing whatever worst thing I could think to do to her - that the record shop downstairs from our flat was actually a pretty good one. But Bowie and Crosby and their singing together, we'd taken for granted at the time, was clearly a joke, an anomaly, obviously Bowie dissing Christmas, showing it up for the empty gesture that Christmas truly was. Then we'd finally broken up. Since then I hadn't gone out of my way to listen to either song again.

Now I walk through the Christmas-cheap streets this morning more than thirty years later, and it may have taken thirty years to dawn on me but I can hear that there's something unexpected, something enthralling, in a song I've always taken for granted too, when all along, unnoticed by me, Bowie was bending the song open and Crosby was holding it steady while he did, and then that soaring harmonious stately part starts where they both leave the song behind or sing a whole other song into it.

It's beautiful.

…When I get into work I hang my coat on the back of my seat, take one of the laptops and one of the earphone sets, sneak into the Ladies, shut myself in the disabled cubicle, plug in the earphones and open a private search engine page on the screen.

In the cubicle in the Ladies in 2016, Bowie circa 1977 is beautiful, feminine, feline, diaphanous, sardonic, unreadable. He has a slight dangerousness about him, a playing-along-for-now. Crosby circa 1977 is as old as you'd expect, his face lined like it's been folded up too many times. He is almost perversely polite, and unexpectedly petit, thin at the chest. One end of the century nods to the other. Does Bowie know about brother can you spare a dime? Does Crosby know about heroes? One follows the other through ye olde English Christmas stage set, past the Christmas tree to the piano. They exchange scripted lines all the way. Bowie tells Bing he lives up the road. He makes an Upstairs Downstairs joke; he says he often comes here to use the piano when the master of the house is away. He pretends not to know who Bing is. They pretend to flick through some sheet music on the piano. They choose a song. The Little Drummer Boy.

Afterwards, apparently, Bowie told an interviewer that he did the show because his mother liked Bing Crosby. When he'd got to the studio, though, and they'd told him what he'd be singing was Little Drummer Boy he'd almost walked out. He said he really hated that song and wouldn't sing it. To stop him from leaving the studio there and then, they wrote him a couple of new parts for it. When they played these to him he nodded okay. They rehearsed and recorded it all in about an hour.

Every child must be made aware, made to care, fellow man, all the love he can.

Crosby died less than five weeks after making the programme. They showed it that Christmas, 1977, over in America and here in the UK.

They released the song as a Christmas single five years later in 1982.

It is unexpected. It resembles an impossibility. It rises above itself. It makes an old song something new.

I take the earphones out of my ear. I click the laptop screen back on to our home page. I leave the cubicle. I wash my hands. I put the laptop under my arm and I go back out into the office.

Everybody looks tired. But as I pass the desks most people smile up at me and I smile back.

******

So here's a Christmas story, then, after all. It's a duet. It's in two pieces, a summer piece and a winter piece.

Are you listening? Can you hear me?

One is about hopeless kindness. It's a gift horse.

Here's the other: it was Christmas Eve in heaven. The doorbell rang. Bing Crosby dusted his hands together in the hall then went to open the door.

It was David Bowie standing there in the snowy threshold with his arms wrapped round himself as if feeling the cold, though in actuality it was September 1977 when they filmed this and not cold at all.

It was lies.

It was fake.

It was all a pretence.

They both kindly let us know it was, and that they knew it was too.

Then they sang us a Christmas song.

Ali Smith

*(Editor: Our thanks to the New Statesman. **Ali Smith** CBE FRSL (born 24 August 1962) is a Scottish author, playwright, academic and journalist. Sebastian Barry has described her as "Scotland's Nobel laureate-in-waiting". Ali Smith's novels include "How to Be Both", which won the Goldsmiths Prize and the Baileys Prize. Her latest book, "Autumn", is published by Hamish Hamilton.)*

8th August 1934

Jeremy Rose goes back to the start of an epoch.

The time - a couple of minutes before 10 a.m., 8th August 1934. The place - Studio 1, Decca Recording Studios, 5505 Melrose Avenue, Hollywood, California.

The musicians of the Georgie Stoll orchestra are getting into their places - laughing, joking and maybe swapping racing tips with the young vocal soloist on today's session. The studio manager finally calls for, "Quiet on the floor". The heavy sound-proof doors to the outside world are closed and the red "Recording in Progress" signs are switched on both inside and out. Final tuning-up of instruments is completed, conversations finished, cigarettes stubbed out and newspapers and racing forms laid to one side.

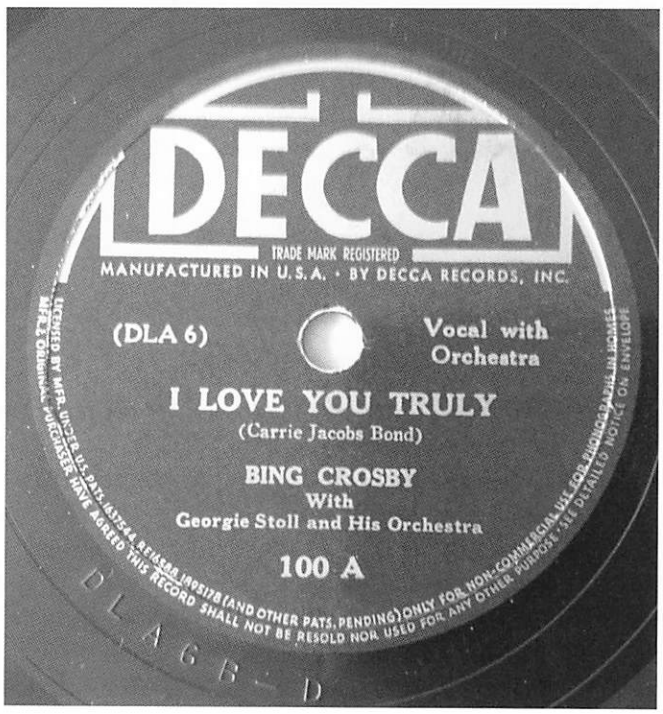
Georgie Stoll walks to his music-stand, opens his orchestral score and taps the stand with his baton to silence the orchestra. Fiddles are placed under chins and brass and reeds raised to lips in readiness. Georgie raises his baton. All is quiet. He waits for a signal from behind the glass wall of the control room to indicate that the

cutting stylus has been lowered onto the master-disc before conducting a silent "bar-for-nothing" in 4/4 time to indicate the tempo before bringing the orchestra in for the introduction to the first take of the day.

After about 12 bars he glances across to the vocalist's microphone where a 31-year-old Bing Crosby is waiting for his cue. Conductor and vocalist maintain eye contact until the down-beat which brings Bing in on the first of his two verses of the 1906 Carrie Jacobs-Bond classic, "I Love You Truly".

So far, nothing particularly out of the ordinary… By this stage in his career, Bing was certainly no stranger to the recording studio. According to the latest comprehensive discography, this take of "I Love You Truly" represented the 305th time Bing had stepped up to the microphone, either as a "Rhythm Boy" or as a solo artist in his own right.

The thing which marks this session out as a turning point in Bing's career is that it was the first session Bing recorded under his new, exclusive contract with producer Jack Kapp and his newly-formed Decca Record Company.



It is a generally held view that this artist/record label collaboration - which lasted beyond Kapp's death in 1949, until December 1955 - was by far the most significant factor in making Bing the biggest-selling recording artist of the 20th century. Equally, it is almost certainly true that Kapp's control of Bing's recorded repertoire from 1934 onwards contributed to a great extent to the "ironing-out" of the musical style which Bing had been developing almost single-handedly since the early Whiteman days.

Kapp made no secret of the fact that he disapproved of the whistling and "boo-boo-boo" aspects of Bing's recordings to date, going so far as to write to his new signing a couple of weeks after that inaugural Decca session, "…The public today wants an unadulterated Bing Crosby, without any frills… I think that the frills should be avoided, as well as "hot" songs. You have in your grasp the opportunity to be the John McCormack of this generation… By doing what we are discussing and by following thru both on records and on radio, you will reach a popularity, which, in my opinion, will be as great as ever enjoyed by any singer in this country…"

There is, of course, no doubt whatsoever that Jack Kapp was correct in his assessment of Bing's potential, but that amazing potential was achieved at what cost to the development of Bing's incredible instinctive musicianship? The fact that Kapp could equate Bing's potential with that of the hugely successful Irish classical tenor McCormack - one of the earliest successful "crossover" artists - shows that he was thinking in purely commercial terms.

Up until the time of the first Decca session, Bing had - with the exception of *Home on the Range* - recorded only contemporary material. Kapp's mission was to turn Bing from a pop singer with a probably finite shelf-life, into the multi-media "American troubadour" with a fabulously successful career spanning five decades.

Not that Bing allowed Kapp to exercise a completely Svengali-like control over his repertoire… He vetoed two of the original choices for that inaugural Decca session - Oley Speaks's "Sylvia" and Victor Herbert's "Ah! Sweet Mystery of Life" - saying, "That's not for me, that's for the high-class singers". (I wonder whether Bing remembered this initial digging-in-of-the-heels when he did actually record the latter song for Decca just four years later!) He was also very much aware of his own enormous value as a Decca "commodity". Just listen to the infamous - and obviously well-lubricated - "Argument with Jack Kapp" during the recording session for "I Wished on the Moon" in August 1935…

Nevertheless, the Decca/Kapp/Crosby collaboration produced - as mentioned earlier - the most successful recording career of all time. But at what cost to the *musical* development of the phenomenon that was Bing Crosby?

When I first started doing the research for this article, I thought I would confine my listening to the recording sessions a few months either side of that initial Decca session - roughly Jonzo 14, 15 & 16. My attention was drawn, however, (via Richard Baker's invaluable *Crosby Fan World* website) to an extract from Will Friedwald's book, "Jazz Singing" (Da Capo Press, 1996), in which he compares the relative influences of Bing and Louis Armstrong on American popular music in the late 20s/early 30s.

It is always stimulating to read the views of writers such as Mr. Friedwald, who, although obviously incredibly knowledgeable and passionate about their subject, are not necessarily confirmed Crosby "nuts" and are therefore completely objective. (My own purely personal definition of a Crosby "nut" is someone who, in

a push-coming-to-shove situation, would rather listen to Bing singing "Poor Old Rover" than Sinatra singing "I've Got You Under My Skin". I include myself in that definition..!)

Friedwald points to several tracks from the Whiteman/Arnheim years - *I'm Afraid of You; T'Ain't So, Honey, T'Ain't So; Make Believe; 'Till We Meet; Oh, Miss Hannah; Waiting at the End of the Road; It Must Be True;* - to illustrate his contention that at this time what Satchmo might have called Bing's "jazz chops" were straining to break free from what Friedwald calls the "elephantine Whiteman entourage". I went back and listened to all these tracks several times and I have to agree. Bing was advancing stylistically in leaps and bounds in a way that mirrored the advancement of side-men such as Beiderbecke, Venuti and Lang, the Dorseys, etc., with the exception that Bing was more consistently "up-front-and-centre" at the microphone.

There's one more major factor to consider before drawing all the threads together to arrive at the session of 8th August 1934 - the coincidence of the start of Bing's recording career with the advent of electronic recording techniques in about 1926.

As far as vocalists were concerned, it seems that the benefits of that technological advance took a few years to kick in - with one shining exception… As I've said, I initially confined my research for this article to the months immediately pre- and post-August 1934. As such, I googled, "Top Songs of 1934 and 1935" and found that the vast majority of the top 100 hits in each of those years were instrumental. So-and-so, "…and his Orchestra", etc. Of the few solo vocalists who are featured in the lists, Bing is by far the most popular.

I think the vast majority of the recording industry - both popular and classical - seized on the "immediacy" of the new technology. It seems that Bing was almost unique in recognising the "intimacy" that the microphone offered to a vocalist such as himself who could eschew the declamatory style of an acoustic-era Jolson or McCormack - each constrained in their own very different styles by the available technology - and create an entirely new way of communicating with a record-buying public.

With Jack Kapp in the 1940s.

In my opinion there is one Crosby track which exemplifies this breakthrough more than any other.

30th March 1931. Los Angeles. Bing's first session under his new contract with Brunswick as a solo artist where, incidentally, Bing finds himself under the aegis of Jack Kapp before Kapp's break with Brunswick and the founding of Decca Records. Bing records two ballads in a style which, according to Fred Reynolds in "The Crosby Collection", "…was to become familiar the world over".

"Out of Nowhere" was the first ballad recorded that day, and in his second chorus, Bing cosies up to the microphone and almost whispers his performance in a way that combines intimacy and immediacy in a way that this listener still finds breathtaking.

Pulling all these threads together and jumping forward to that first Decca session which forms the basis of this article, Jack Kapp has very clear ideas about the way in which Bing's recording career can progress. He will take that instinctive microphone technique and expand the singer's repertoire around it so that he can embrace almost every available genre, in order to make him, "The John McCormack of this generation".

Certain things will have to go by the way-side - at least until such time as Bing is so completely established as a fundamental element of American popular culture that he can do what he likes! No more whistling, no more "boo-boo-boo"-ing, no more "hot" songs. Jack is in control.

The irony is that - to my ears - by far the most successful track of that first Decca session is, "Someday Sweetheart", where Bing loosens up with a wonderfully laid-back, immediate, "jazz-chops" performance which makes me think it's a pity that Jack Kapp couldn't integrate more of that side of Bing's style into his overall vision of Bing's recording future.

All in all, though, given what *did* appear over the next 20-odd years under Jack Kapp's guidance, I'm not complaining…

Jeremy Rose

(Editor: Many thanks Jeremy for your very thoughtful article. Jack Kapp apparently did not like the opening verses of songs and they are omitted from many of Bing's recordings of the time with "White Christmas" being a notable example. Interesting that Bing encouraged Ken Barnes to use the verse on a number of the recordings he made with him. Personally I wish that he hadn't as Bing sounds a little strained on some of them. I mentioned this to Ken on one occasion and suggested that it might have been better if Bing had spoken the verse in a dramatic way. Ken felt that Bing would not have agreed.)

Celluloid Crosby

David Lobosco considers Bing's WWll Movie.

When World War II broke out, Hollywood did its part for the war effort. Many Hollywood stars from Jimmy Stewart to Tony Martin served bravely in the war. Other stars like Bob Hope and Der Bingle performed countless times for the soldiers and raised money for war bonds. Reportedly, Bing tried desperately to enlist. However, due to his age (Bing was 38 when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941) and color blindness, Bing was not accepted into the military. Unfortunately, Bing never really made an official "war" movie but, if we ignore the opening scenes of *White Christmas*, I would say 1944's *Here Come the Waves* was probably the closest Bing ever came to making one.

Most of you will know the story. The first thirteen minutes devotes itself to the Allison twins, Susan and Rosemary (Betty Hutton), sisters of very different personalities entertaining at New York City's Cabanna Club. Susan, a happy-go-lucky twin born 12 minutes after her dignified older sister, Rosemary, worships Johnny Cabot (Bing), a singing idol of millions. In spite of their popularity, Rosemary enlists in the Navy, with Susan following suit, each becoming members of the WAVES. Both girls going through their five-month training process with other female recruits at the Naval Training School in the Bronx. While on liberty leave, Susan takes Rosemary to a movie theater, seating hundreds of swooning teenage bobbysoxers, attending the personal appearance of Johnny Cabot following the release of his latest motion picture.

Johnny Cabot sings "That Old Black Magic" for the bobbysoxers.

After the performance, Windy Windhurst (Sonny Tufts), Johnny's Navy pal, introduces him to his girlfriends from back home, who happen to be Susan and Rosemary. While Susan is overly excited seated next to her living legend, Rosemary snubs him. Because Johnny is tired of being chased by female fans, disguising himself to avoid being attacked, finds the serious-minded Rosemary a welcome change of pace, a girl who actually dislikes him. Initially rejected from Navy enlistment because of his color-blindness, Johnny gets his wish enlisting after the Navy requirements become less strict, stationed at a Navy Base in San Diego, California, leaving his thousands of swooning females fans behind him. With Johnny attempting to be as good a sailor as his father was during World War I, thanks to one of the Allison twins, also stationed in San Diego, Johnny gets himself involved in some theatrical project rather than fulfilling a personal obligation he's long wanted to do. Other members of the cast are: Ann Doran (Ruth); Gwen Crawford (Tex); Noel Neill (Dorothy); Mae Clarke (Ensign Kern); Harry Barris (The Bandleader), and in bit parts, Mona Freeman and Yvonne DeCarlo, among others.

Filmed in Hollywood from May to August of 1944, it was the first and only time that Bing was paired with musical dynamite Betty Hutton. It was an odd pairing since Bing was so laid back, and Hutton was a nervous ball of energy. Hutton at the time was the musical queen at Paramount Studios so it would be natural to pair them together. Bing by this time had approval of his leading ladies, but I had the opportunity to interview actress Marjorie Reynolds' daughter Linda in the mid-1990s, and she says that Bing had wanted Marjorie for the role of the twins, but the studio insisted on Hutton. Surprisingly Bing and Betty had a good bit of chemistry in the movie. However, Betty Hutton was one of those stars that had good things to say about Bing in the 1970s, but as the years went by she changed her mind. It was also reported that Bing dated Hutton in the 1950s after Dixie Lee died, but I find that hard to believe with all the personal problems that Betty Hutton had.

Like so many musicals of the time, the music makes the movie. Johnny Burke and Jimmy Van Heusen usually wrote the songs for Bing's movies, and had won an Oscar for their song "Swinging on a Star" for Bing's last movie *Going My Way*. However, for *Here Come the Waves*, Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen were brought in to write the score. The song "That Old Black Magic" was featured in the movie, which Mercer and Arlen had written in 1942. The song was first recorded by Glenn

Miller and His Orchestra, and Mercer wrote the lyrics with Judy Garland in mind. Bing sings the song and makes it his own as he croons in a style of a young Frank Sinatra. I do not understand why Bing did not record this song in 1944, because it was the musical highlight for me in the film, but he did of course record it late in his career in 1976.

There are also two really underrated love songs in the movie that Bing sang with Betty Hutton, but he recorded them as solos for Decca -"Let's Take the Long Way Home" and "I Promise You". Probably the most notable song in the film was "Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive". In the film Bing and Sonny Tufts sing the song in a blackface number (this would be the last movie in which Bing would appear in blackface), but, as we know, Bing later recorded the number commercially with the Andrews Sisters. The song would be nominated for Best Song in 1945, but lost to the ballad "It Might As Well Be Spring" from *State Fair*. Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer also wrote a song that was not used for the film called "My Mama Thinks I'm a Star". I have never heard the song, but I am guessing it was written for Betty Hutton.

Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* wrote a very favorable review of the film on December 28, 1944:

Paramount and its favored son, Bing Crosby aren't going precisely the same way that they went in Mr. Crosby's last picture—and everyone knows which way that was—but they are taking an agreeable turn together in "Here Come the Waves," which trooped into the Paramount yesterday. They are ambling along that vein of comedy, with vamped-in music, that Mr. Crosby used to rove, and they have Sonny Tufts and Betty Hutton as convivial companions this time. Sure, the traveling is nothing like as charming as it was on that last prize-winning tour, but it offers a few attractive vistas and several gaily amusing jolts.

In this one our old friend, the Bingle, doffs mufti for nautical attire and plays a swoon-throwing crooner who becomes a member of Uncle Sam's fleet. As a gob he runs into Miss Hutton playing twin sisters, both of them Waves—one a dignified lady and the other a jive-happy chick. He also becomes somewhat violently involved with Mr. Tufts, who is likewise a side-wheeling sailor with a strong luff toward one of the girls. And, what with confusion of identities and a Wave recruiting show to put on, a plot of comic sorts is concocted and the musical numbers are hauled in.

*Mr. Crosby sings most of the latter, either solo or in company with his pals, and does very nicely by them, as he does by his droll and genial role. "Accentuate the Positive," which is sung with Mr. Tufts, is probably the best of the several Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer tunes. Miss Hutton, in her broader characterization—meaning that of the more rambunctious sis—is also terrific in a gag song called "Strictly on My Own Tonight" (*actually "There's a Fella Waiting in Poughkeepsie"). *Regarding Miss Hutton's dual performance, it should not be mistaken for high art, but it certainly can be commended as very vigorous virtuosity. And Mr. Tufts is dry and diverting as a mildly disturbing element.*

There are several scenes in the picture of Waves in training which are atmospherically good, and the settings contrived for the Wave show are well above regulation grade. Paramount, in short, has been generous to the service in every respect. But the humor is the best part of the picture—and the best part of the humor is that which has Bing crooning in travesty of a famous "swooner" who shall be nameless (just this once)."

A *Variety* review from December 20, 1944 was favorable as well:

"A kinda corny title, "Here Come the Waves" manages to surmount the handle and emerges as a tiptop film. Interspersed in Crosby's nifty song logy, Johnny Mercer-Harold Arlen have supplied a set of excellent songs, including a dandy novelty in "Accent-Tchu-ate the Positive"; two corking ballads in "Let's Take the Long Way Home" and "I Promise You," the latter as a duet with Betty Hutton playing the alter ego... 'Old Black Magic' is reprised in a delicious rib on Frank Sinatra. Crosby is cast as the new pash crooner, and his mike-clutching stance, accented by the whinnying dames, leaves no secret as to whom Der Bingle refers. It's a dandy take-off on The Voice, but it's not harsh; in fact, it's a sympathetic salve for all out-of-service crooners..."

Bing and Betty wonder whether to take the long way home.

As I said earlier, I am not sure about the pairing of Bing and Betty Hutton, but they were two very popular stars in 1944. Hutton does a good job playing twins, and when I was younger and first saw the film I thought they were two separate people. Sonny Tufts was a good foil for Bing, but in his other movies I have always found Sonny to be a bit wooden. However, I don't want to dwell on the negative, because this is really a great Bing Crosby movie. I enjoy it for Bing and the music, and I also enjoy it for how it shows how life was like during the war years. Yes, this is not a war movie on the lines of *Back to Bataan* or *Destination Tokyo*, but *Here Come the Waves* could be considered a little biographical in a way. It shows the emergence of the bobbysoxer craze, and it also shows a famous person who wants to do his part for the war effort, which is what Bing wanted to do. The film admittedly contains more than its share of enthusiastic flag waving, but it is a clever spoof of what life was supposed to be like for a popular crooning idol.

I have been starting to show my two younger children Bing Crosby movies, and I was going to show them this film, but my son said to me "I'm just not ready to see a black and white movie yet", so I showed *High Society* to them. This movie is on my list of Bing films I want to show them though. *Here Come the Waves* is certainly not a 100% accurate portrayal of the war, but it is accurate at showing the amount of patriotism the country and the war had in 1944 as it fought the evil powers that were threatening the world. If you have not seen this movie in a while, do yourself a favor and give the film a viewing. You may find yourself humming and dancing to songs that are over 70 years old, or it may just inspire you to join the navy!

David Lobosco **davidlobosco@yahoo.com**

75 years after its premiere, Bing Crosby's "White Christmas"still enthralls listeners

Nathan Weinbender's article in Spokane's *The Spokesman-Review* of December 22 is well worth a read. Nice to see our members Bill Stimson and Howard Crosby featured.

It was Christmas Day, 1941, 18 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Bing Crosby was on the air with "The Kraft Music Hall," a variety radio program he hosted for a decade. He announced that he would be debuting revered songwriter Irving Berlin's newest tune, a Christmas song that was to be the musical centerpiece of Crosby and Fred Astaire's upcoming vehicle, "Holiday Inn."

That song was, of course, "White Christmas," and 75 years later, it hasn't faded away. In fact, it's such an indelible part of American culture that it's almost difficult to imagine a time when the song didn't exist.

Among Crosby's vast catalog of nearly 1,700 recordings, "White Christmas" is the one that most stands out. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Crosby's version of the Berlin song is the best-selling single of all time, with an estimated 50 million sales since its debut, and it's been covered by nearly every major artist you can think of.

But the signature tune of Spokane's most beloved former resident nearly wasn't a classic at all, and it seems that Berlin was one of the only people who initially had any faith in it.

Bill Stimson grew up on the 700 block of East Sharp Avenue, just a few blocks away from Crosby's childhood home at 508 E. Sharp Ave. That proximity no doubt inspired the Eastern Washington University journalism professor's lifelong interest in the crooner.

Bing's home in Spokane. (Photo by Ken Crossland)

"From my youngest years, I remember people talking about when Bing lived down the street, and I had a lot of neighbors who knew him well," Stimson said. "Later on, the first time I read his autobiography, I realized we had much the same upbringing."

Bing Crosby, real name Harry Lillis Crosby Jr., was born in Tacoma in 1903, and his family relocated to Spokane three years later. The house on Sharp was built in 1913 in what was a predominately Catholic neighborhood. Crosby was an altar boy at St. Aloysius Church and attended Gonzaga High School (now Gonzaga Prep), and he later enrolled in Gonzaga University, which was practically in his backyard, to study law.

His interests, of course, soon shifted to the performing arts. Crosby became active in the Gonzaga theater department and built up his chops with musical partner Al Rinker, appearing frequently at the Clemmer Theater in downtown Spokane.

That venue, which has gone through several name changes, is now known as the Bing Crosby Theater. The rechristening was spearheaded by Stimson and his organization, the Bing Crosby Advocates of Spokane,

which also hosts the annual Bing Crosby Holiday Film Festival at the theater at 901 W. Sprague Ave.

"When I started (the organization), I was shocked to find out that very few people got what kind of Spokane connection Bing had. … Somehow it had never sunk in," Stimson said. "Someone would say, 'How come it's named the Bing? Did he appear here one time?' No, he learned his business on that street, on Sprague Avenue. He had a hangout there and appeared in the theater and started his career there."

Stimson says Crosby's humble Jesuit upbringing in Spokane is a crucial part of the genial, everyman persona that made him a star.

"He really was a product of Spokane," Stimson said. "When he left, he was pretty close to a finished product, the product that the rest of the world would discover. And that's unusual."

Crosby's nephew **Howard Crosby** also grew up in Spokane – he's now based out of Walla Walla – and he got to know his famous uncle during their time on the golf course. (Crosby was an avid golfer, especially in the later years of his life.)

"He was much more reserved than the character he portrayed on screen," Crosby said. "Uncle Bing couldn't have been as successful as he was if he didn't have a serious side."

Howard Crosby is now a part-time vocalist himself, performing his uncle's songs (he most recently appeared at the Bing with the Celtic group Affiniti). When he does take the stage, Crosby says there's always one song that everyone wants to hear.

"Whenever anybody finds out that I'm his nephew and that I have musical abilities, they want to hear me sing 'White Christmas,' " Crosby said. "It doesn't matter if it's the Fourth of July."

It's unclear exactly when "White Christmas" began gestating in Berlin's brain, although notes from an unproduced musical revue suggest he may have been tinkering with it as early as 1938. We do know that Berlin started working on the song in earnest in early 1940, when he reportedly proclaimed to his longtime transcriber Helmy Kresa that he'd come up with the best song anyone had ever written.

Berlin conceived *Holiday Inn* as a showcase for his newest batch of songs, though he reportedly gave the film's studio, Paramount Pictures, two ultimatums: Bing Crosby was a lock for the lead, and "White Christmas" would be the star of the show. (When *Holiday Inn* was remade in 1954 *(sic),* it was retitled *White Christmas*, further emphasizing the importance of the song.)

The plot of *Holiday Inn* – Bing is an ex-vaudeville star who quits the biz to run a farm in rural Connecticut – is deliberately thin, merely a line on which to hang Berlin's holiday-themed songs. "White Christmas," perhaps the film's least showy song, is front and center in the movie's most iconic scene: Crosby, at the piano in the middle of the night, breaks into a seemingly impromptu duet of the song with co-star Marjorie Reynolds.

Holiday Inn was set to be released (curiously enough) in late summer of '42, and Paramount pinpointed "Be Careful, It's My Heart," a jaunty, mid-tempo love song, as the film's obvious radio hit. When the movie finally screened for audiences and critics, most reviews, much to Berlin's dismay, didn't even mention the "White Christmas" number.

But as the holiday season approached, the song crept its way onto the radio, and it was soon Berlin's most successful composition in years. It went on to receive an Oscar for best original song, an award that had, in previous years, gone to "Somewhere over the Rainbow" and "When You Wish upon a Star."

The song's success baffled the record industry, but it had obviously struck a nerve, and much of that had to do with the escalation of World War II.

"Berlin created an anthem that spoke eloquently to its historical moment, offering a comforting Christmastime vision to a nation frightened and bewildered by the Second World War," journalist Jody Rosen writes in his book "White Christmas: The Story of an American Song." "In the song's melancholic yearning for Christmases past, listeners heard the expression of their own nostalgia for peacetime."

Rosen goes on to explain that Crosby's recording was aired frequently on armed forces radio stations and that copies of the single were sent in care packages to boost troop morale. "White Christmas" delivered a dose of unabashed nostalgia and warmth to a country no doubt needed it, and it continued to be a symbol of hope throughout the war.

"I once asked Uncle Bing about the most difficult thing he ever had to do during his entertainment career," Howard Crosby said. "He didn't have to think about it. He said in December, 1944, he was in a USO show with Bob Hope and the Andrews Sisters *(sic)*. They did an outdoor show in northern France. … At the end of the show, he had to stand there and sing 'White Christmas' with 100,000 G.I.'s in tears without breaking down himself.

"Of course, a lot of those boys were killed in the Battle of the Bulge a few days later."

The Crosby family home is now owned by Gonzaga, and it has housed the university's collection of Crosby memorabilia since 2014. Stephanie Plowman, Gonzaga's special collections librarian, estimates the collection features more than 250 individual pieces, including some of Crosby's gold records, century-old family snapshots and photos, press clippings and athletic medals from Crosby's college days.

Our curiosity for all things Crosby is apparently as enduring as the popularity of "White Christmas": Plowman says the Crosby house gets about 3,500 annual visitors, and that number appears to be increasing. That fascination isn't merely a Spokane thing: The house's visitor log book includes the inscriptions of folks from Ohio, Connecticut, Louisiana, British Columbia and Bogota.

"He hit in all the major ways – radio, movies, songs," Plowman said. "People think he's dying off, but he still has a following with the younger generations."

Crosby himself has become synonymous with Christmas – you hear his velvety baritone and instantly think of the holidays – and much of that has to do with a single song he first committed to tape in an otherwise uneventful, 18-minute recording session.

"That song is part of the American ethos by now, and Bing Crosby is associated with all that," Stimson said. "Bing is the one who made a white Christmas *de rigueur* for Christmastime, that thing that we had to have."

And although "White Christmas" is really Berlin's lamentation about spending his winter in sunny California, one could argue that Crosby's version is a distinctly Spokane song.

"What would have been a white Christmas for Bing was what he saw out the windows of that house, the snowflakes settling down around the pine trees," Stimson said. "That meant Christmas to Bing, and it means Christmas to us because of that song."

"I'm sure that from Bing's perspective, it was a Spokane song, absolutely," Howard Crosby said. "It would have immediately evoked the sort of things he experienced as a boy. … As the artist performing the song, there would have been a strong personal recollection of life growing up in Spokane."

Nathan Weinbender

Dreaming a Little Dream With Bing Crosby: Nothing Is Dated on John Lennon's Jukebox

Stuart Mitchner writing in *Town Topics*, Princeton's weekly newspaper, on May 3 found many links between Bing and The Beatles.

Born May 3, 1903, a household name in his time at the heart of the 20th century; a Best Actor Oscar winner, Hollywood's top box-office attraction for five years, with 38 number-one records, more than Elvis or the Beatles — Bing Crosby was "a monumental figure," in the words of his biographer, Gary Giddins. Yet during a 2001 book tour for *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams, The Early Years 1903-1940*, Giddins was surprised by the "degree of ignorance about his entire career …. It really became a question of 'Bing who?'"

With the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' monumental *Sgt. Pepper* album only a month away, no one's asking "Paul who?" Not when Sir Paul McCartney, who'll be 75 on June 18, has been filling stadiums during his One-On-One tour, finishing off the last three nights in April at the Tokyo Dome. In July he'll be in arenas from Miami to Chicago, ahead of a September 11 concert at the Newark's Prudential Center, followed by concerts at Madison Square Garden, and Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

How big were and are the Beatles? Crosby himself had some thoughts about the dimensions of the phenomenon: "Sinatra was … bigger than I ever was, and Presley was bigger than Sinatra, but there's never been anything like the Beatles." That was in 1964, three years before *Sgt. Pepper* lit up the 60s. Now here it comes again, "the act you've known for all these years" trailing clouds of bicentennial glory with a new stereo mix of the album, an expanded deluxe edition as a two-CD set or two-LP vinyl package, and a "super deluxe" six-disc box set.

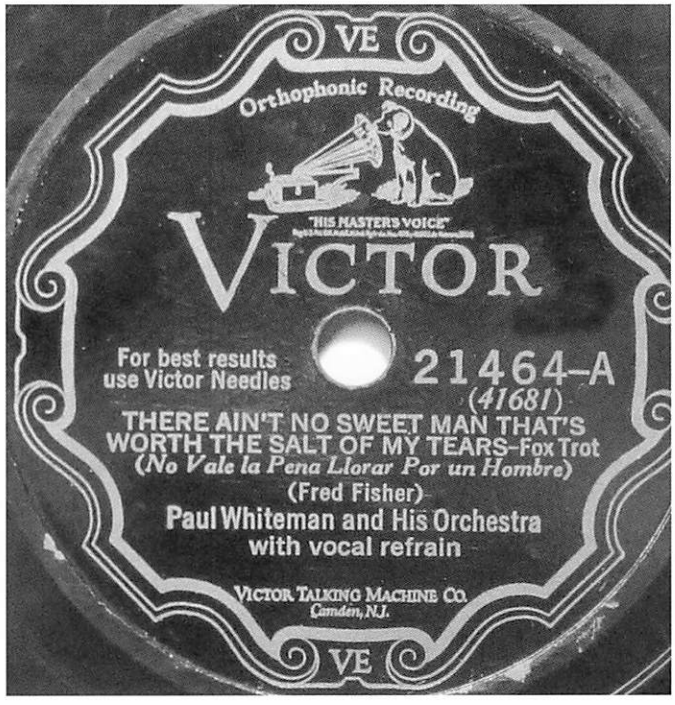
Fans of Bing

It was never "Bing who?" for the Beatles. While John Lennon and George Harrison were both self-proclaimed fans of "the first hip white person born in the United States" (so said jazz legend Artie Shaw), it was Paul McCartney who translated the nuances of Bing's style not only in "Yesterday" and "Michelle," but in compositions and performances like "Hey Jude" and the jaunty, tuneful "Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da," both of which Crosby performed on TV in the 1970s. So subtly pervasive was the sound of Crosby's baritone on the English airwaves when McCartney was growing up, he could have gone to the college of crooning without even knowing it.

Meanwhile, what John was responding to around the same age was the same "la-la-la-how-life-goes-on" Crosby spirit that gave his songs the conversational immediacy Lennon took to the limit in "Strawberry Fields Forever." As for crooning, his rendering of "If I Fell," with its infectious ascending harmonies, was one of the moments in *A Hard Day's Night* when people other than teenyboppers began falling for the Beatles. Asked in a 1980 interview by his eventual biographer Ray Coleman what music he was listening to, Lennon mentioned Hank Williams, Carl Perkins, John Gielgud

reading Shakespeare, and "anything that Bing Crosby had ever done." According to Coleman, Yoko's gift to John for his 38th birthday was a bubble-top Wurlitzer jukebox he stocked with "as many Bing Crosby records as he could get." John especially liked the way Bing "would banter and talk in the songs." According to a friend at the time, the three tracks he played over and over were "Whispering," "I'm Gonna Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter," and "Dream a Little Dream of Me."

The curious inclusion of "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," on George Harrison's last, posthumous album, *Brainwashed*, can be explained by his interest in Bing Crosby, who sang the song both on film and record: "He had a lovely voice, a presence that sort of crackles. He always remained popular over here [i.e., England]. I like his stuff very much." George also covered one of Bing's most croonful tunes, Cole Porter's "True Love" from *High Society*, releasing it as a single. His wife Olivia recalled: "If the wind was blowing and the full moon was up, he'd put on Bing Crosby singing 'Sweet Leilani' and just make the moment even better!" Harrison's son Dhani says his "dad's favorite recording in his later years" was an album of Paul Whiteman's big band recordings featuring Bing with Bix Beiderbecke called *Bix 'n' Bing*. As it happens, I was playing this exhilarating record during Bush/Cheney's invasion of Iraq; my favorite track was "There Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears." I've been listening to the same CD again, and again, after 100 days of Trump.



The Charm Thing

If you're revisiting Bing by way of records or on YouTube, what you see upfront is one of the qualities that led Artie Shaw to use the word hip, not only in the sense of personal style, musical acumen, familiarity with the scene, and a nonchalance that in someone else might be seen as cool or even arrogant but in Crosby feels like charm. The Beatles communicated the same quality, it's what audiences all over the world responded to in *A Hard Day's Night*. This sort of genial, playful charm transcends genres and boundaries; it's as much a part of rock 'n' roll as it is of a Cole Porter lyric or Bing Crosby having a high time sparking everybody-gets-into-the-act numbers like "Let's Bake a Sunshine Cake" from Frank Capra's *Riding High* or the great "Didja Ever" drinking duet with Sinatra from *High Society*. The same sense of easy spontaneity, where music just takes off from a real-life moment, is what happens when John Lennon starts singing "I Should Have Known Better" during the baggage car card game in the film's first number. And while John sings, Richard Lester fits in reaction shots from the "clean old man," Paul's grandfather (Wilfrid Brambell), not unlike the way Capra intersperses the whinnying horse in "Sunshine Cake."

From "Please" to "Please Please Me"

One of the most gratifying features of YouTube is that nothing seems dated when what's instantly available can become instantly compatible. Forget the three decades between Bing's "Please" from *The Big Broadcast of 1932* and the Beatles "Please Please Me," either of which might be called "dated" by members of the Instagram Facebook generation. It's all working because the medium equalizes everything. You're in charge of the program, it's your show, with some help from the online users who post the clips.

Here it helps to know that the seed of the Beatles' first number one hit in the U.K. is in Bing's number one hit in the U.S., John Lennon's aim having been to write a song that employed the punning double use of the word "please" as in the line "Please lend a little ear to my pleas." Never mind that Bing croons while John's version is powered through drums, amplified guitars, and soaring harmonies. The common denominator is passion, to make the "please" so insistent that the "plea" becomes a command, as in John's relentless "C'mon, C'mon, C'mon!" No less unrelenting than the force that drives an audience of girls mad with joy when the Beatles sing "Please Please Me," Bing's "Please" at the end of *The Big Broadcast* is directed at a melancholy beauty named Mona (Sharon Lynn), it's all for her, she can't escape, he won't let up, he keeps coming closer, it's almost like an erotic attack, yet at the same time it's as if hearing the song is bringing her to life, saving her soul. He's not out to seduce her, but to rescue her. In the moment when he and the song are closing in, the beat picking up, you can see up close the essence of his power, the force of the genius under the surface of the hip, nonchalant crooner. Perhaps this is what George Harrison meant by "a presence that sort of crackles"—in this moment, Bing's electric.

Dreaming and Whispering

I've been playing Bing's "Dream a Little Dream of

Me" and "Whispering" on John Lennon's online jukebox. It could be the late hour or one too many trips down YouTube's memory's lane but when I was listening just now to "Whispering," I heard Bing ad-lib "sounds like a Beatle"*(Editor: Bing actually says "this sounds like a beat")* in the bantering way John enjoyed. He says it as trumpeter Bob Scobey is playing, a little over two minutes into the number. Of course in 1957 when *Bing with a Beat* was recorded, there's no way Crosby could have said such a thing, but when John heard it again and again at the Dakota in the late 1970s he must have smiled at the coincidence. It's a Beatles thing, after all. Fifty years ago people were playing paranoid games inspired by the bogus rumor that Paul McCartney had been killed in a car crash. The "sounds like a Beatle" moment reminds me of the close-listening some fans were doing, obsessively sussing out hidden hints on *The White Album* or hearing what sounded like Lennon's voice saying "I buried Paul" at the end of "Strawberry Fields Forever." In 1994 the surviving Beatles recorded two songs with the voice of their dead mate, "Free As a Bird" and "Real Love." In effect, John was crooning both tunes from beyond the grave, which suggests, if nothing else, the irresistible hold these voices have on us, on our sense of time, memory, and reality, something Gary Giddins highlights in the epigraph from Gilbert Seldes he uses for the introduction to *Pocketful of Dreams*. "There was a time, not so long ago, when it was truthfully said that no hour of the day or night, year after year, passed without the voice of Bing Crosby being heard somewhere on this earth."

Gary Giddins has completed the second volume of his biography, *Bing Crosby: Swinging on a Star, The War Years 1940-1946*, which will be published by Little, Brown in the fall of 2018.

Stuart Mitchner

"Old Dad" Allowed Guitar Playing 'Round Here—Just Ask Jose!

Martin McQuade returns to our pages again as he meets up with Jose Feliciano.

Bing was a champion of the guitar and guitarists. First and foremost was Eddie Lang. After Eddie's tragic untimely death, Bing worked with such stellar practitioners as Carl Kress, Bobby Sherwood, Perry Botkin, Eddie Condon, Dave Barbour, Vince Terri, and, of course, Les Paul. Bing even helped to create a vogue for the Hawaiian steel guitar in the late thirties through his many best-selling recordings with authentic practitioners such as Lani McIntyre and Sam Koki. Extending into the sixties, Bing relied upon "Wrecking Crew" members Bill Pitman, Barney Kessel and Glen Campbell for his country western album, and sang with Roy Clark on his 1969 Christmas special. During his last years, Bing toured extensively with a jazz quartet that included Johnny Smith.

Bing sought and found vitality through the guitar, and this is readily apparent in his 1968 TV special, *Making Movies,* where he famously welcomed Jose Feliciano, possibly the youngest professional guitarist with whom he ever shared a stage. After Bing affords Jose an opportunity to display his dazzling mastery by way of a solo, playing his current hit, "California Dreamin,'" they join forces on "Mama Don't Allow" where Jose obviously wows Bing with his breakneck technique. 1968 was indeed the year that Jose fully captured the world's attention, and appropriately joined Bing and The Supremes for the stupendous "Hit Songs of 1968" medley.

Jose was in New York in early June and performed at The Iridium, "The Home of Les Paul," to honor the maestro on his 102nd birthday. He played several selections from his 2015 CD and vinyl release, *Live at The Iridium*, a celebration of Les' centennial, assisted by the current Les Paul Trio, led by Lou Pallo. A few of the songs have Bing connections: "Besame Mucho," "Beyond the Sea," and "The Lady Is a Tramp." Jose granted me a telephone interview the day prior to this concert, during which we spoke about his long-ago experience with Bing.

Interview with Jose Feliciano, June 8, 2017

Thank you, Jose, for agreeing to speak with me about working with Bing almost 50 years ago when you were a special guest on his 1968 TV special, *Making Movies,* a show recently restored by Bing Crosby Enterprises and broadcast in the USA on the GET-TV cable network.

***Jose**: I was relating to my wife Susan the encounter I had with Bing Crosby. I told her that I heard Bing perform duets with other artists. When he did the duet with me, it was done so whole-heartedly. He was having such a good time. It was very special.*

Of course, you're referring to "Mama Don't Allow No Rock and Roll in Here." Who selected that song?

***Jose**: It was out of my own show and I believe I selected it.*

Did you perform "California Dreaming" on the show in Bing's presence?

***Jose**: I can't recall.*

Bing was watching you play very intently. I have a feeling that he was remembering the day traveling with Eddie Lang, just him and his guitarist. Bing really loved working with guitarists. He shows affection for you when you're playing. He was thrilled watching you and I think he was transported to the days when he was working with Eddie Lang back in the early thirties. Did you feel the extra attention he was paying to you when you were playing?

Jose and Bing let themselves go on "Mama Don't Allow".

Jose: *I did - I really did. I thought, "What a lucky guy I am to be performing with a star who had such stature, who was famous before Frank Sinatra." Before the girls were screaming at Frank, they were screaming at Bing. He was a hot item. He had an affection for me. I was thrilled and excited, and I didn't take it lightly. At this time, he was trying to get his son a guitar and he asked me who made my guitars. I gave him the address of my guitar maker in Los Angeles. He doesn't have a shop there now. I don't know where he has his shop. Anyway, he made great guitars so I gave Bing his address. I felt good about that.*

That would have been Harry, who would pursue playing the guitar. In fact, he played the guitar with Bing on his 1971 Christmas special, a few years after *Making Movies*.

Jose: *I always enjoyed Bing. I listened to Bing back in the 1950's when he had a duet hit with Grace Kelly, "True Love." I also like the forties Bing. When I got older I gave myself a musical education. I didn't go to school, I didn't go to college. I don't want to say that things came to me easily because they didn't. There were times when I was first learning the guitar that my fingers would be bleeding. I learned by listening to records: American, Hispanic, etc. Sometimes I would put my radio on and listen to Greek music. I just became a musical storehouse.*

Did Bing select you for *Making Movies?*

Jose: *I have no idea. My name probably just came up. You never know about these things. I'm just happy to be a part of that history.*

Did you ever encounter Bing after that show?

Jose: *No, I never did. Don't forget—he died in Spain playing golf. What a way to go!*

What guitar did you use during your duet with Bing?

Jose: *Candelas*

While exploring your discography I discovered a further name linking you to Bing. Right after Eddie Lang died, Bing was devoted to finding another guitarist to fill the void.

Jose: *I would have played with him then. (Laughs)*

Well, this was in 1932.

Jose: *I know. I wasn't born then. I was born in 1935.*

Bing finally found somebody in the late thirties who worked with him all the way to 1954. That's Perry Botkin, Sr.

Jose: *Perry Botkin, Jr, the son, was one of the greatest arrangers who ever lived. He made great arrangements for me.*

There are a number of Beatles selections, which appear in the "Hits of 1968" medley in *Making Movies.* That was just a year following the *Sergeant Pepper* album. What memories do you have of that LP?

Jose: *I used to listen to it a lot with headphones to hear the candy The Beatles put in their mixes, like going from one headphone to another; like making a sound like Paul McCartney walking from one side of the studio to another on the squeaky floor; the E major chord at the end. I love the album. It was The Beatles' best album. By the way, I once did a version of "Hey Jude" that I think was very sick. It was 8 minutes and something. I did a guitar solo on that. I like the arrangement that I did with Ray Brown of "She Came in Through the Bathroom Window" with an arrangement with Ray Brown. I did a version of "Let It Be" where I played the electric guitar. I did "A Day In the Life," taken from my concert at The London Palladium in 1969.*

I understand that in 2016 you recorded a Christmas album, *Feliz Navidad*, which includes "White Christmas."

Jose: *I did. I recorded "White Christmas" as an instrumental on my first Christmas album in 1970.*

Today is Les Paul's birthday and you are performing tomorrow at The Iridium where Les Paul played for years. Do you have any memories of Les Paul?

Jose: *My first memory of Les Paul is when he came to see me at Gerde's Folk City when I about 17 or so. He listened to me play and I never knew he was there. He came back stage and he told me, "You have a great future as a guitarist. I never heard a guitarist as young as you do the things you do on the guitar." I was thrilled. It was like Segovia coming backstage and telling me I had a future with the guitar. Later Les and I became friends. I would go to The Iridium every Monday, or the other place that he played. I would jam with him. That*

was fun. He took a real liking to me because on the evenings that he wasn't feeling very well he would call on me to fill in for him. That was a thrill, to fill in for the great Les Paul.

With that reminiscence, Jose excused himself, having to rehearse for his concert the following evening. After his sensational sold-out appearance, Jose permitted me to visit him backstage. A final casual question received a simple response that captured the impact that one enduring guitar enthusiast had upon him.

How was it working with the other stars of *Making Movies*? Bob Hope? The Supremes?

***Jose**: I don't really remember them. Bing mattered to me.*

Martin McQuade

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters and emails received since the last issue

Jeremy Rose, by email from Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, UK

I have now had the chance to view *Crosby In Search of Crosby* and I agree with everything Richard Baker said in *Keeping Track* in the last issue. Richard had to give an instant reaction because of the need to immediately submit his article to the Editor. But I would go further. I think *Crosby In Search of Crosby* is editorially sloppy, technically inept and totally devoid of any journalistic integrity.

The whole thing is topped-and-tailed by excerpts of cabaret performances by Chris Crosby and his family. Why? It is rather difficult to avoid the conclusion that the whole project is ultimately self-serving.

In between, we have cut-and-paste interviews - from another source - with various celebrities who undoubtedly had close personal and/or professional contact with Bing. With one glaring exception… Stewart Granger claims to have been photographed with Bing in Spain shortly before his death. In more than 40 years of my fascination with the life and career of Bing Crosby, I have never seen any reference whatsoever to any interaction between Bing and Granger. I did, however, check with some eminent Crosbyphiles whose experience and knowledge is far greater than mine, but they too knew of no such interaction.

There are also interviews conducted by Chris Crosby himself, and these range from rather weird to downright offensive. It is not clear from her contribution whether Terry Moore, the "widow" of Howard Hughes, ever even *met* Bing. *(Editor: Bing and Ms. Moore both guested on Bob Hope's radio show of January 14, 1953.)* The quotation marks serve to suggest the controversy surrounding Moore's claim that she and Hughes were secretly married.

There are interviews with the widows of Dennis and Lindsay Crosby, which - given the tragic circumstances of their deaths - had a certain poignancy, but were ultimately rather disjointed and rambling.

Chris Crosby does, however, have an ace up his sleeve in the form of his father - Bing's brother Bob. An extended interview is interspersed throughout the film, and although at first I found some of the reminiscences fascinating (I had never previously seen any interviews with Bob Crosby), I soon found myself spluttering in disbelief and anger.

As Richard has said, Bing's life and career following Dixie's death are almost totally ignored, but at one point, Bob conveys his obviously extremely low opinion of Bing's second wife Kathryn, culminating in a one-word insult which left me speechless.

I don't question Bob's right to his opinion, but for Chris Crosby to have allowed the remark to remain in the final cut without the balance of other opinions from anyone who knew, or knows, Kathryn, is disgraceful.

Despite the fact that Bing Crosby is my musical idol, I have never been in the business of painting him as whiter-than-white, come what may. He was a human being. He also happened to be one of the most famous people on the planet, who brought untold joy to countless millions. Chris Crosby's efforts have done a disservice to Bing's memory and legacy, but an even greater disservice to his own integrity.

Crosby In Search of Crosby is ultimately an ill-judged piece of work, which should be allowed to descend into well-deserved obscurity.

(Editor: Well said, Jeremy! Another who had the opportunity to see the documentary was Ken Crossland.)

Ken Crossland, by email from Dorridge, Solihull, UK

Thanks for alerting me to "Crosby In Search of Crosby" on Amazon Prime. I had no idea it was there!

What a curious programme! Lots of interesting things but equally, a number of things that made me

cringe. At the end of almost two hours, I was left wondering quite what the purpose had been in making the film. Is it an affectionate memoir? An attempt to tell "the truth" aka "dish the dirt"? Or is it just little more than a family home movie? At different points, it seems to be all of these things, and perhaps other things too.

The overwhelming regret I felt about it was that it didn't seem to have had any professional editing. I don't know Chris Crosby's background and it's clearly 100% his project, but I found the whole thing very bitty, repetitive and at times confusing - and yet, strangely watchable. Often with programmes that inspire these reactions in me, I end up skipping my way through them but this one I watched from start to finish. But there are so many obvious things that could have improved it - some idea of dates on the various interviews, many of which must be almost 30 years old, would have been good, and some greater diligence about accuracy would have been nice. When Bob Crosby tells us that Bing died on the 17th hole from a brain haemorrhage, rather than the 18th from a heart attack, you wonder what else he gets wrong. Similarly Stewart Granger's recollection of meeting Bing in Marbella the day before he died, when we know that Bing was only ever in Madrid that week, raises doubts. And as for the contributions of Mrs Howard Hughes, the less said the better.

Ultimately, like so many things about Bing, it leaves more questions than answers. I think we all now know that there was a complexity about the private Bing that was concealed from his public image - I found Donald O'Connor's comments about this quite telling, but well balanced - but regrettably, the programme didn't take me any further forward in understanding or unravelling this complexity. Perhaps it's too much to expect that anything now, ever will, although the best hope still remains Gary Giddins' work. His second volume, assuming it appears, will be fascinating.

Thomas Hirschmann, Salzburg, Austria (as seen on Crosby Fan World)

In the seventies Bing obviously planned to give concerts in Germany. As the reputable German news magazine "Der Spiegel" reports in its issue from September 20th 1976 Bing wanted to appear on stage in Frankfurt, Berlin and Hamburg and thereby thank the Germans for calling him lovingly "Der Bingle". According to "Der Spiegel" he intended to donate the sales revenues of his concerts to German charities. For those who speak German here is the link to the article in the Spiegel news archive: http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-41157517.html Bing's death in 1977 presumably was the reason why the concerts never were realised. As a matter of fact I watched a German TV show ("Am laufenden Band") on October 15th 1977 when the host (Rudi Carrell) announced that it had been planned that Bing Crosby should sing 'White Christmas' in his show but that he unfortunately had died the day before.... Could it be that the German concerts had been planned for October 1977 for the days following the TV show?

Incidentally watching this TV show as a 13 year old boy was the starting point for me for becoming a Bing Crosby fan. Hearing from the host that "The Old Groaner" had been the most successful singer on Earth, I curiously watched all the films and shows which were transmitted during the following days in commemoration of Bing - and as you can imagine I got hooked immediately!

Stan White, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, UK

The spring edition was great and the features on *Holiday in Europe* and *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings* sort of inspired me to write.

So Bing thought *Feels Good, Feels Right* was the best of his British albums (Letter to Priscilla, 23 April 1977)? I agree when talking about the albums he made in the middle 1970s. The song "Nevertheless" is probably my favourite. Ken Barnes was a bit critical about the album, which was sometimes his way when considering any recordings in which he was not involved.

Ken and I were very much involved in producing the CD *Bing Crosby: Some Fine Old Chestnuts & New Tricks* (two original LPs on one classic CD) MCLD 19377. This was in 1998. I had pleaded with Alan Hodgson of Universal to re-issue these two albums on one CD and he agreed. So he was the project co-ordinator, and Ken Barnes was the producer.

Ken wanted to obtain master tapes for the albums from MCA in America but for some reason they could not be located. So they sent tapes copied from LPs. Ken was not happy because as good as Peter J. Reynolds was at audio restoration and digital mastering, Ken wanted the best from the originals.

I told him that I had two Japanese CDs, one for each album, which were obviously from original masters because of the quality. Ken borrowed them and these were used for the original album tracks - and also the bonus track "Rain" which the Japanese had added to their *New Tricks* CD. Ken then added two more Buddy Cole tracks plus the two Bing / Mel Tormé songs with Buddy Cole.

Ken wrote the notes for the CD with a bit of help from others who are listed on the CD credits – including you Malcolm.

When Alan Hodgson sent me a copy of Ken's notes I saw that Ken was again being critical about certain of Buddy Cole's arrangements. So I wrote an extra note which Alan used giving the background to Buddy's whole career which I was able to do as I got to know him well. I had first contacted him by a letter which Bing forwarded to Buddy for me.

Ken was quite pleased with the note I wrote for the CD. As he said to me afterwards, "I just give my

opinion, others have their own."

One of the last conversations I had with Ken was when he told me that he and Pete Moore sat down and wrote the song "On the Very First Day of the Year" in just about one hour. He did say someone else, I think abroad, also recorded the song, so some royalty payments turned up now and again.

Details of the two Japanese CDs are:

New Tricks (manufactured 1989) 25P2-2833, Warner Pioneer Corporation, Japan. Booklet cover same as LP. The CD label says "Decca". All the words of the songs are given in English and Japanese.

Some Fine Old Chestnuts, MCA Victor Japan MVCM-295. CD label says "Decca". Booklet cover same as LP. All the words of the songs are given in English and Japanese.

Keith Parkinson, by email from St. Helens, UK

I was impressed by the research that went into your "Hollywood Victory Caravan" article. David Lobosco's article on "Going Hollywood" made good reading too. *Celluloid Crosby* is in safe hands.

Anton Garcia-Fernandez's piece on the "Holiday in Europe" album raises the question of whether this can be the subject of a future Sepia release. It is out of copyright and there is some interesting material available from the initial aborted recording session.

Bing's sing-a-long LP's have never been top of my play list. I recall that at least one of them was sent to me from the States by Fred Romary Jr. Michael Crampton probably benefitted from Fred's generosity about the same time. I have probably listened to the discs three times over the last half century so playing the Sepia release has revived my interest, partly due to Robin Cherry's superb restoration.

Your obituary on Debbie Reynolds reminded me of her appearance at Liverpool's Royal Court Theatre in 2011. She took questions from the audience, one of which asked her about Eddie Fisher. She replied that he was just finishing his recent book as he so enjoyed colouring. How was she to know that the last couple of years have seen adult colouring books making the best seller lists?

What I didn't see in the magazine was any reference to your article in "Films of the Golden Age". I think this should be drawn to the attention of our members. It is a perfect overview of Bing's movie career. What did receive a mention in the magazine was Lars Schinnerling's book about Ginny Simms. As you point out this is an excellent publication. I will never know how he managed to price this at £15 without making a loss.

Looking forward to the next magazine.

(Editor: Keith mentioned my article in "Films of the Golden Age". In BING #173 (page 33) I gave details of the quarterly magazine "Films of the Golden Age" which had been published since 1962 and had never had a feature about Bing. I duly submitted an article and after being amended by the editor here and there, it was included in the magazine's winter 2016 issue together with 4 pages of photographs. I plan to reprint it in BING magazine as soon as space permits.)

Ken Shaw, Hessle, UK

John Marshall

I did not have the pleasure of meeting with John, but in 2014 I contacted him to purchase a copy of his DVD "Bing: A Night at the Movies" plus "A Century of Celluloid". We enjoyed a lively conversation about Bing and various other artists of the time.

At Christmas 2014, John kindly sent me a lovely card, *A Very Merry Christmas*, containing his DVD – The New Footloose Follies – Merry Christmas 2014. In 2015 John sent me copies of the Footloose series Vols. 1-4 periodically with the request that I would comment on them.

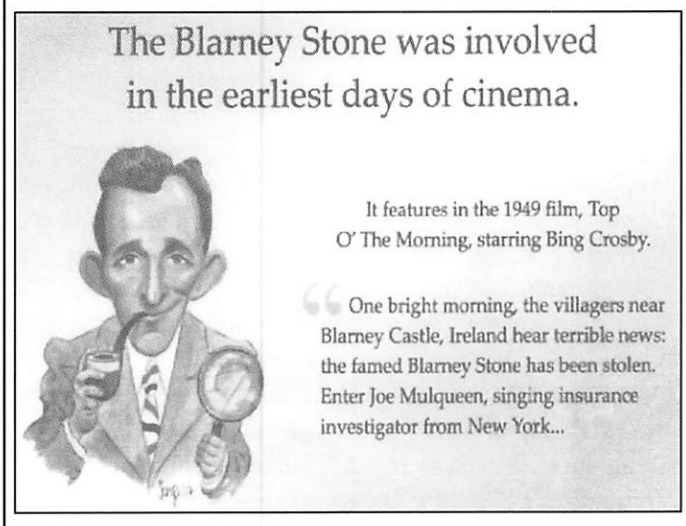
I enjoyed our conversations and came to the conclusion that he felt that he was sometimes misunderstood, but he always promoted Bung as being the very best.

I was sorry to read of his death and can only echo your sentiment –"we shall certainly miss him."

Arthur Blood, Derby, UK

Many thanks for the latest BING magazine and its contents. I love the pictures on the front and back covers. I also appreciated reading the nice obituary that you wrote for John Marshall whom I had known for more than 50 years. He did much to keep Bing's memory alive and he was very clever, especially with the computer.

Some time ago, I spoke with you on the phone about a postcard that I had received from Neil Robinson about Bing and the making of the film about the Blarney Stone. As promised I am enclosing a copy for your readers to see.


The Blarney Stone was involved in the earliest days of cinema.
It features in the 1949 film, Top O' The Morning, starring Bing Crosby.
One bright morning, the villagers near Blarney Castle, Ireland hear terrible news: the famed Blarney Stone has been stolen. Enter Joe Mulqueen, singing insurance investigator from New York...

Ron Field, by email from Morton, Washington, USA

On Saturday 14th. October – Bing's 40th.

Anniversary of passing, I am presenting during the afternoon a 'double bill' feature at the Morton Roxy Theatre.

Firstly - Errol Flynn in *Santa Fe Trail*. One of 8 films made with Olivia De Havilland and also featuring Ronald Reagan. Reagan plays George Custer. Interestingly Flynn played Custer in *They Died With Their Boots On*. Also featuring Raymond Massey, Toronto born and brother of Canadian Governor General Vincent Massey.

Secondly - *Road to Bali*.

Why this double bill?

They both died on 14th. October. Errol in 1959, aged 50. Bing 1977 of course.

Should be a good day hopefully with me giving out plenty of publicity.

Gary Giddins, by email from New York.

I was reading, with much pleasure, the new BING, when I came across the obituary notice for Pat Friday, which put me in mind of one of the passages (below, complete with source notes) that I reluctantly agreed to cut from my book. In any case, you're welcome to use it if you've a mind to do so. It's really about the Burkes and Johnny's penchant for cruel practical jokes, but as you'll see, it was triggered by Pat Friday.

The book is scheduled for 2018, in autumn, I presume, but I'll have more specifics as we get further in the process.

I'm so glad you've stuck with the magazine.

"Johnny Burke's practical joking and the planning that went into it aroused a certain admiration in Crosby, though he admitted it could get nasty. "The most heartless rib he ever pulled," Bing said, involved Bessie and played out soon after they married. That year, Bing signed a vocalist named Pat Friday to *Kraft Music Hall*, billing her as the Singing Co-ed. *(note i)* One night, Bing and Dixie, the Burkes, and a few other couples went to Ciro's to support NBC's buildup for Friday. While they danced Bessie said that she once knew a girl named Pat Friday. Burke said, "You did? Well, you win the contest. If anybody knows a girl with the same name, NBC will pay $18.75." This began a tease that went on for weeks, as Bessie wrote to NBC, and then complained that she never got a reply, whereupon Burke asked if she enclosed a Campbell Soup label, which she then did only to learn that it had to be a label for Gumbo, which she also did, only to learn that she overlooked another regulation. Months later, the two couples went bowling. "Bessie was a big powerful girl, beautiful, and real strong," Bing recalled, "and we were talking as we bowled about [one] thing and another and ribs, pulling ribs on people." Bessie lifted a ball and scoffed: no one would fall for their jokes, they were so obvious that any fool could see it in their faces—"I can tell in a minute if anybody is ribbing me." As she swung back her arm, Johnny purred, "Did you ever hear of Pat Friday?" Bing said she pitched the ball so hard she "almost decapitated the pin boy," before retrieving her coat and stalking out. *(note ii)*

(note i) Larry Crosby signed Friday to a management contract in 1939, after she won a college singing contest. When she compromised the co-ed buildup by getting married, he canceled her contract. Friday later claimed that the Crosbys blackballed her until she complained to their mother, who got them to lift the ban. She later worked with Jack Webb, who asked her permission to name his *Dragnet* character Joe Friday.

(note ii) Lucky Dictaphone belt 14.

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A NOTE FROM AUSTRALIA

Graham Pascoe writes from Bathurst, NSW, Australia:

Thanks to all concerned for another interesting magazine. As usual, I look for an Australian connection with topics in the last issue of *BING* and I've decided to begin with the interesting article 'Hollywood Victory Caravan' because Australians have just been remembering the Battle of the Coral Sea which was fought off the north-east coast of Australia in May 1942 and the subject matter relates to a unique contribution which Bing made to Australia during World War 2.

About two months after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour it began the first of its sixty-three bombing raids on Darwin, our northernmost city. Other towns in northern Australia were bombed and in 1942 it is fair to say that Australia was a fearful place. Most Aussies would have been unaware of the Hollywood Victory Caravan and Bing's participation in it and although Bing Crosby did not visit Australia he enthusiastically supported our government's war bond campaign

The short films Bing made for the US Treasury Department and War Activities Committee in support of the US war effort were brought to Australia and shown in our cinemas. Three records of the songs he sang were pressed in Sydney and issued to cinemas, to be played at interval, and to radio stations. One was 'We Have Another Bond to Buy' from *Hollywood Victory Caravan*. Bing was also used in the promotion of our Security Loan in a cinema advertisement *Calling in the Tune* in which he sings backed by a US Navy Choir with an end message urging Australians to invest in the Security Loan.

In 1945 Australia's wartime Prime Minister John Curtin had a commemorative plaque made for Bing as a gesture of thanks. The inscription on the plaque reads: 'To Bing Crosby with thanks from the people in

Australia for your help in our Victory Loan. Signed John Curtin, Prime Minister'. When the plaque was auctioned in 1982 the Australian media personality and long-time Crosby fan Bert Newton arranged for a friend to bid successfully for it (and for one of Bing's pipes).

DECCA
MADE IN AUSTRALIA FOR
COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE (AUST) PTY. LTD. SYDNEY, N.S.W.
DEAR HEARTS AND GENTLE PEOPLE
(Fain & Hilliard)
(Speed 78)
BING CROSBY Vocal
With Jud Conlon's Rhythmaires
And Perry Botkin and His String Band
(L5162)
E. H. MORRIS & CO. LTD.
Y6203
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On a more gentle subject, Jim Willard's article was interesting. 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People' was a hit record for Bing in Australia. It reached number four position in its eighteen-week stay in our charts and became Bing's third-best-selling record in 1950. Recordings by Dinah Shore and Joe Loss shared the honours. The song had a special significance for Melbourne radio station 3DB. It was promoting a local charity and received a specially recorded message from Bing urging listeners to support its effort, the greeting being followed by his recording of 'Dear Hearts and Gentle People'.

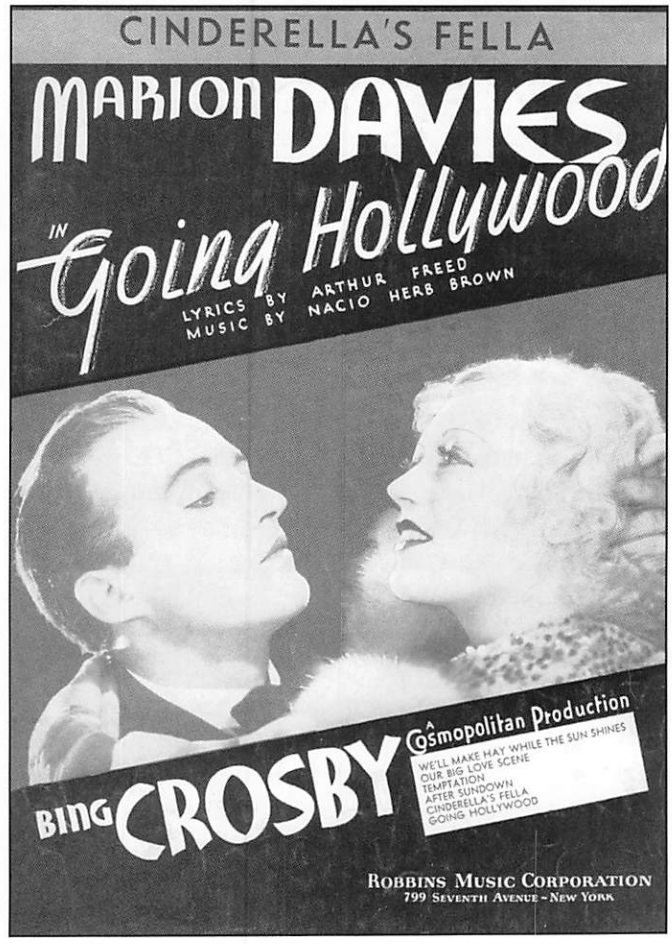
Keith Parkinson's contributions on Bing's movies were always informative and I'm sure all readers will be pleased that David Lobosco will continue the tradition and his article on *Going Hollywood* is a great start.

In January 1934 Australians learned from the movie trade magazine *Everyones* that *Going Hollywood* would arrive shortly. By the time the film was previewed for band leaders, music publishers and radio personalities in the Sydney M-G-M theatrette in early in February, *Everyones* informed readers that the title was *Cinderella's Fella.* On 21 February the magazine ran a full-page advertisement on its inside front cover, a prime position, promoting the film to exhibitors with photos of 'Bing (King of Romance)' and 'Marion (Peg o' My Heart) Davies'. It announced that 'there will be a big drive made on the part of the music publishers and gramophone companies with Bing Crosby's first appearance in theme songs {which were listed} actually taken from the picture'. The reason for the change in title will be explained later and the use of that preview and subsequent announcement are interesting examples of how M-G-M promoted the film (and no doubt others).

Cinderella's Fella opened in Sydney at the St James Theatre, which seated 1850 patrons, and ran for four weeks. The review in *The Sunday Sun and Guardian* described it as enjoyable and that Bing had 'quite often [forgotten] the crooner in the actor, although his voice must be especially congratulated for two out of the six insidious numbers, "We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines" [Unlike *The New York Times* they got the song title right.] and "Our Big Love Scene".' The following day the review in *The Sydney Morning Herald* described Bing's screen presence and acting as 'very insignificant'.

There was an unusually long delay of five months before the film went to Melbourne and it lasted for only three weeks and two days at the Metro Theatre (capacity 1479). It was a co-feature with *Tarzan and His Mate* starring Johnny Weissmuller and Maureen O'Sullivan. The reviewer in *The Herald* devoted four paragraphs to Tarzan and his 'amazing feats' and just one to *Cinderella's Fella* through which 'Bing Crosby croons his way'.

Bing's records of songs from the film became available while it was running in Sydney. The disc with 'Thanks' and 'Black Moonlight' remained in the record catalogues for twenty-two years. 'Temptation' with 'We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines' lasted until 1955. 'After Sundown' with 'Beautiful Girl' was less successful being deleted in 1939 but reissued in 1952. All three enjoyed reasonable sales in the early 1950s.



Why did *Going Hollywood* become *Cinderella's Fella*? Sydney film and cinema historian Malcolm Smith has suggested that two months before it was due to be screened in Sydney another M-G-M film *Broadway to Hollywood* had run for just one week in Sydney and had been described as 'inexcusably dreary' and management may have feared a confusion of titles and a difficulty of selling the second film to exhibitors. So the film was re-named with the title of a song from the film which was sung by Marion Davies and Fifi D'Orsay.

What is it about *The Bells of St Mary's* that inspires journalists to re-write the screenplay and casting of that movie? *BING* No.175 showed us how Scott Marks of San Diego imagined a contemporary version last year. In 1994 Chris McGillian looked at how Hollywood's presentation of the Catholic Church had changed: '...today, the skinflint Horace Bogardus would probably have made his fortune selling cocaine, Father Chuck O'Malley might be expected to pull the local roughs into line with a fully-loaded Magnum...'

In October 1946 Sydney's Regent Theatre announced the arrival of the film in *The Sydney Morning Herald* with and advertisement exclaiming 'Your heart will be wearing a smile' but the newspaper's review next week was dismal: 'In view of Leo McCarey's success with the earlier Father O'Malley picture, *Going My Way,* this... must be considered a failure. Bing Crosby, as Father O'Malley, is still doing his good deeds, and is still in good voice, but the film appears to lack verisimilitude.' In Melbourne the review in *The Age* after it's 'Gala Premiere' at the Esquire Theatre told readers that its 'running time of more than two hours is only achieved by judicious padding of the action...This film has a ready-made audience of Bing Crosby's host of admirers but there is too much of it'.

There were hosts of admirers. The film ran for eight weeks at Sydney's Regent (capacity over 2200) and also at Melbourne's Esquire (capacity 1576). In 1958 it was given a big promotion when it was screened in three suburban cinemas in Melbourne. As for Bing's recording of 'The Bells of St Mary's', Australian's were able to buy it five months before the film came. It became the best-selling of all of Bing's 1946 releases which numbered twenty records. A second disc of two songs from the movie with 'Aren't You Glad You're You' and 'In the Land of Beginning Again' produced two Aussie hits for Bing.

BING No. 175 includes some interesting insights into some of Bing's albums. When *Bing Sings Whilst Bregman Swings* was released on Verve in Australia for some reason the alternate takes of three songs were used: 'Cheek to Cheek', 'The Blue Room 'and 'Mountain Greenery'. *Songs I Wish I Had Sung (The First Time Around)* came to Australia as a Festival LP in 1957 and the review of that disc in the Sydney newspaper *The Sun-Herald* contrasted with that which had been expressed in the English magazine *The Gramophone* the previous December which had stated 'It may be that Mr Crosby was too conscious of those who actually did sing those songs'. The Australian reviewer described it as a charming disc on which 'Bing graciously overlooks the fact that most of the artists concerned are heavily indebted to him for the style which brought them sales'. I couldn't find any Australian reviews of *Holiday in Europe,* the album so thoroughly described by Anton. It too, was released here on Festival and one of the songs was surprisingly (to me) included in an MCA LP released in 1976. Titled *It's Easy to Remember*, the album professed to be a compilation of twenty of Bing's hit songs. One was 'Never on Sunday' from *Holiday in Europe.* The song had been a hit in Australia in 1961, but not for Bing. Nevertheless, *It's Easy to Remember* made the album charts in Australia and stayed for six weeks and the following year the record company produced a special plaque of a metal pressing of the disc on which was inscribed 'Presented to Bing Crosby by Astor Records to mark sales in Australia in excess of $200,000 of the album "It's Easy to Remember"'. I wonder if Bing ever received the plaque.

Compliments to Greg Van Beek for providing the cover photos for *BING*. I listen to each of his Nostalgia Radio Time programs and reference to his inclusion of a Family Theater broadcast reminded me that in the early 1950s the evangelist Father Patrick Peyton visited Australia from USA to launch a 'Family Rosary Crusade'. Sydney radio station 2SM was owned by the Catholic Church and broadcast a recording of Bing saying the rosary to promote the crusade.

Graham Pascoe gpascoe34@bigpond.com

Ralph Sutton

Ralph Earl Sutton (November 4, 1922 – December 30, 2001) was an American jazz pianist born in Hamburg, Missouri. He was a stride pianist in the tradition of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller.

Sutton had a stint as a session musician with Jack Teagarden's band before joining the US Army during World War II. After the war, he played at various venues in Missouri, eventually ending up at Eddie Condon's club in Greenwich Village. In 1956, he relocated to San Francisco, California, where he recorded several albums with Bob Scobey's dixieland band, including *Bing with a Beat*. From the 1960s onward, he worked mostly on his own. However, when the World's Greatest Jazz Band was established in 1968, he was the natural choice for piano. He left that band in 1974 due to the extensive travel involved, and joined an old sidekick, Peanuts Hucko, in a quartet in Denver, near his home in Evergreen, Colorado.

Sutton with producer Milt Gabler in 1950.

Bing clearly enjoyed working with Ralph on the *Bing with a Beat* album and on October 10, 1957, he wrote to Crosby fan Stan White in England.

> Thanks for your recent letter. Provided me with a great deal of information about things on the musical scene over there. I'm sure you must have liked the Jack Teagarden Earl Hines All Stars. I saw a great deal of Earl in San Francisco just before he left. He has a wonderful group there in San Francisco, featuring Muggsy Spanier, with Ralph Sutton on the piano. I consider Sutton the finest - at least for my taste…

Subsequently on November 19, 1960 Bing wrote to Ralph Sutton in New York (with a copy to Si Rady) saying:

> Dear Ralph
>
> Got your card, and also the announcement that you're going to be at Condon's for awhile, so I thought I'd drop a note to say hello.
>
> I have been around a bit since we were last in touch – two month trip to Europe, and since then have visited Palm Springs, some work in Hollywood, and am now up at the Rising River Ranch for a couple of weeks in Northern California, shooting some ducks and geese. Will go back to Los Angeles around the first of December, taping a television show the week of 13th through the 19th, with Rex Harrison, Carol Lawrence, Chevalier, and an Italian singer we discovered in Rome. Sort of a semi-classical singer, but with a great deal of sentimental appeal, I believe.
>
> Ralph, I've been wondering about the possibility of our doing an album. I have a company now. Si Rady is running it for me. It's called Project Records. We make up an album and then distribute it through whatever company we can get the best deal out of – Columbia, MGM, Warners, Victor – it really doesn't matter.
>
> I wonder if you have any ideas what kind of album we could do. There's only one rather confining factor. I'm not allowed to record anything for any company that I've ever done for Decca. Sometimes this poses serious problems, but after all, there are lots of songs which I've never sung, and which are great.
>
> I'm thinking in terms of something like what we did with Bob Scobey, with a little more emphasis on songs such "Sit Right Down and Write Myself a Letter" – things of that type – where we could feature a great deal of piano and maybe use a small group.
>
> Si Rady is very thorough about something like this, and has no hesitancy in spending a great deal of time in preliminary discussions and plannings. When you consider it realistically this is, after all, the only way to get a good album. The day is past, for me at least, when I can go in and knock off twelve songs without some preliminary run-throughs and rehearsals, and get anything worthwhile as the ultimate product.
>
> Pursuing this suggestion, why don't you dig up some titles and send them to me, and I'll talk to Si about them and see what he thinks, and we'll try and uncover a few. If the material can be found and developed, I think we could get a worthwhile album.
>
> I suppose now that you're in New York, you're seeing Artie Lynch once in awhile, if he hasn't gone to Florida. He generally goes there just as soon as the wintry winds start howling around Manhattan Island. If he should be still in town, send him my regards.
>
> Be expecting to hear from, Ralph, when you have time.
>
> All best regards to you and your family –
>
> As ever, Bing

Interesting that Bing wanted to work with Ralph instead of Buddy Cole, his regular accompanist. However Buddy had suffered several heart attacks in 1959 and no doubt this was the reason for the approach to Ralph. Sutton replied to Bing suggesting titles for a possible album and Bing wrote to him again on December 3. Again, the letter was copied to Si Rady.

> Dear Ralph
>
> Thanks for your note. I have noted contents, and will await receipt of some more titles. "My Fate Is in Your Hands" sounds like a very good suggestion.
>
> From the review, the paper sounds like you've got a helluva quartet together. I'm glad it's working out so well. We might use the whole group, if we can get this album promoted.
>
> The important thing, Ralph, is get something worked out on each number so that we just don't go in there and do choruses, and I mean worked out

instrumentally. I'll have to work out some things vocally, too. That's the only way we have a chance of getting the album to move – if it has some novelty, and because of this novelty, some appeal.

I'm doing an album next week which should be a dilly. I don't know whether it will sell or not, but it's going to be quite an effort – 101 songs. Of course, I don't sing all of each song, but a good part of it. They're mostly standards, gang songs, old chestnuts of one kind or another. The tracks are already made, and it will be a question of me going in there and working to horns. Looks like a two or three day job.

Made one called "Sing Along with Bing" which had a remarkably good sale, and it's in much the same character. We use a vocal group, and a big band. Well, away we go, anyhow.

Hope the engagement at Condon's is coming along nicely, and they're not working you too hard. Say hello to Eddie for me. His daughter is my goddaughter, you know.

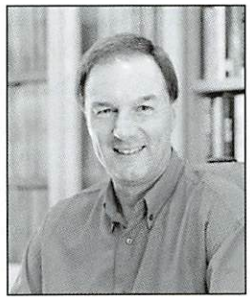
All the best, Bing

As we know, nothing came of the proposed album unfortunately, but it's interesting to note that Bing chose to sing "My Fate Is in Your Hands" in the TV show he made in England the following year. It's fascinating to read Bing's thoughts on recording too. Incidentally, I don't know who Artie Lynch was.

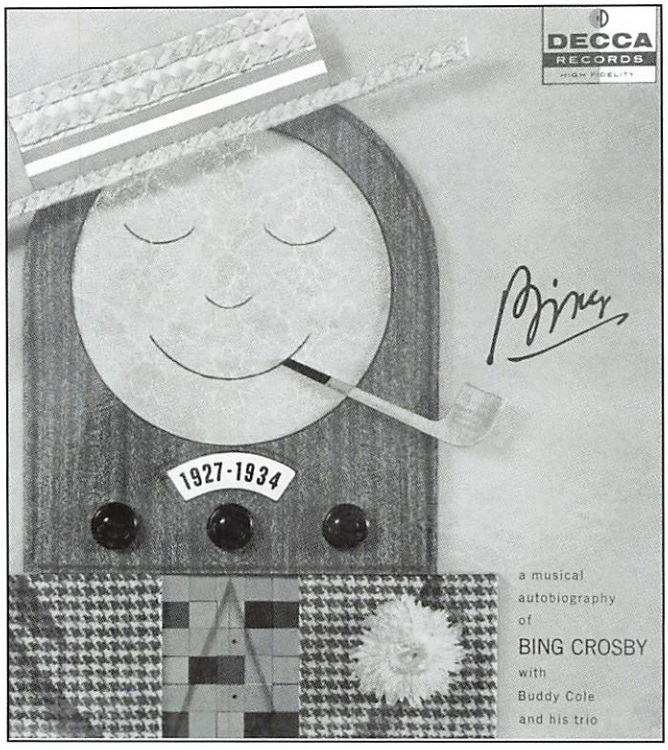
Malcolm Macfarlane

CROSBYANA

Ken Crossland considers the importance of album covers.



"Don't judge a book by its cover" is one of those phrases that you just grow up with - well, if you grew up after 1944 that it is. The phrase is most commonly attributed to a 1944 edition of the African journal on American Speech, "You can't judge a book by its binding." It was popularised even more when it appeared in the 1946 murder mystery "Murder in the Glass Room" by Lester Fuller and Edwin Rolfe ("You can never tell a book by its cover") although there is also a line of descent that traces the phrase way back to a George Eliot novel from 1860.



Whatever its lineage, I suspect that the phrase applies even more powerfully to record covers than it does to books. I say records rather than CDs because for me, one of the sad things about the demise of vinyl was the end of the racks of LP sleeves that you could browse through to your heart's content. I know that CDs have covers too but the little plastic cases were never quite the same.

The vast array of LP covers that feature Bing must be second to no other artiste and whenever I come across a Crosby LP that I haven't seen before, I still get a kick from it. It led me a few years ago to acquiring a vast number of Crosby LPs just for the sleeve content alone, so many of which I had never seen before. Bing's 5-volume Musical Autobiography from 1954 is a case in point. It was most commonly released as a boxed set, although in the USA, all five LPs were released individually, each with a different sleeve. The same thing happened in the UK, but only for Volumes 1 & 2. Volume 1 was the standout, featuring a very cleverly drawn caricature of Bing, with his face imposed on a radio set. It was the first of many sleeves that used some of the Crosby trademarks - the boater, the pipe, the golf shoes, the loud clothes - to depict him, rather than an actual photograph. "Bing and the Dixieland Bands" and especially, "New Tricks" used that technique to great effect, whilst "El Señor Bing" in 1960 reverted to the caricature technique to create an outstanding cover. Shame about the record.

Of course, there were some outstanding album covers that simply used photographs of Bing. The best of these were invariably those that featured a shoot specifically for the album. The great photo of Bing and Bob Scobey astride two chairs in the recording studio for "Bing with a Beat" probably takes first prize. "Thoroughly Modern Bing" was good and a little unusual in that it used a contemporary photo of Bing with lighting that implied a silvery quality to his

hair(piece), a juxtaposition perhaps between the venerable artist and the contemporary material on the album. And who could forget the wonderful cover photo for "Seasons", which Bing sat for just three days before he passed away.

Yet throughout this cornucopia of visual delights, there is one series of album sleeves that stand out. The one described by Bruce Hanson earlier in this issue. These are the 15 sleeves that made up the "Bing's Hollywood" series of LPs, issued in 1962, and each one featuring a full colour drawing of Bing in costume from one of the films represented on that particular album. The collection of LPs that I bought a while back inevitably contained some duplicates and when I passed on one or two of the Bing's Hollywood albums to a local charity shop, the record man there immediately commented that the illustrations were drawn by a well-known artist and illustrator, so well-known in fact, that he couldn't remember his name. But when, a month or two back, our good friend Arne Fogel posted all these sleeves on his Facebook page, I got an answer as to the name. "James Meese", Arne told me, and an Internet search reveals that during his relatively short life (1917-1971), he was responsible for oodles of paperback book covers, often quite sultry, as well as many LP sleeves. Any Al Jolson fans who have the Decca / Brunswick "Al Jolson/Oscar Levant" will recognise the similarity to the Crosby series, although his spread was much broader, taking in Sinatra, Buddy Holly, the Four Tops and Sammy Davis to name but a few.

DECCA RECORDS
PRESENTS...
BING'S HOLLYWOOD
15 fabulous albums – Bing sings 189 great songs!
An extraordinary series, BING'S HOLLYWOOD is unique in both scope and content... and represents a colorful musical chronicle of Bing Crosby's dazzling domination of the American movie screen!
BING CROSBY
Every song in this remarkable series was written for, and performed by Crosby in a motion picture, but their astounding popularity makes it impossible to consider them as merely movie songs. Consider White Christmas, as much a part of Christmas tradition today as mistletoe; I'm An Old Cowhand, which is rising to the status of American folklore; Sweet Leilani, more popular than almost any other Hawaiian song; or Easter Parade, Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral, My Heart Is A Hobo, Adeste Fideles, Blue Skies, The Bells Of St. Mary's, and so on, almost without end.
THESE ARE THE SONGS, AND THE VOICE, THAT HAVE BEEN HEARD BY MORE PEOPLE, IN MORE PLACES, THAN PERHAPS ANY OTHERS IN THE WORLD.
AVAILABLE AS INDIVIDUAL ALBUMS OR AS A PRICELESS CROSBY COLLECTION
exclusively on...
DECCA
MARCH 25, 1962
111

This year marks the 55th anniversary of the release of the "Bing's Hollywood" series and in a year that also marks the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing, it is worth pausing briefly to reflect on one of the least successful pieces of album artwork in Crosbyana. In 1987, the 10th anniversary of Bing's death was marked by the release of the "10th Anniversary Collection", 73 of Bing's radio vocals with Buddy Cole re-mastered, re-engineered and re-defined by Ken Barnes. It was a ground-breaking project, because whilst now, the idea of adding new backing to old recordings has become commonplace, then, the only artist for whom it had been tried was Jim Reeves. The Barnes project took Bing's CBS radio vocals with Buddy Cole - recorded with just a core rhythm section in the late 50s - and added new orchestrations and in some cases, vocal backing too. To be fair, it wasn't strictly a 1987 project because more than half of the tracks had appeared in 1978/79 on "Songs of a Lifetime" and "Come Rain or Come Shine", LPs issued by Philips. But in 1987, Ken was back in the Angel Studios in Islington, North London, with Pete Moore again adding new life to 30-year old tracks. Leslie Gaylor, the Isle of Wight Crosby stalwart, was there and provided an account of the sessions in the September 1987 issue of BING, although for me, the most interesting aspect of his account was his discussion with the project executive from Warwick Records. Massive TV advertising was planned, displays in all the major record stores, and plans to press 130,000 sets in time for Bing's anniversary. And as if to re-iterate the newness of it all, the set was to be available on 3CDs as well as the traditional LPs. A US release on the Silver Eagle label was planned too.

Barnes and Moore probably never got the credit they deserved for the set. The review in the subsequent issue of our magazine was somewhat grudging, questioning

whether recordings made for radio, usually in one take, should be given such exposure and pointing out (yawn) that the songs were not as good as the ones Bing sang in the Thirties. Of course, we now have all these songs in their original, pristine form, from the masters discovered in the ubiquitous basement, but I have listened again to the enhanced versions - for the first time in many years, it must be said - and they are remarkably good, and probably stand the test of time better than the United Artist albums from 1975-77. If you have not played them for a while, dig them out. You will be pleasantly surprised.

Sadly, the set had no great commercial impact. Where did it all go wrong? Perhaps the answer is in the cover. "Songs of a Lifetime" had featured an awful drawing of Bing that looked like it had been done by an 8-year old child, but the 1987 release featured a strange black and silver box, with a photographic image of Bing in top hat and tails, originating from a mid-Thirties film. It was out of date, low impact and totally at odds with the ground-breaking nature of the recordings. The Silver Eagle release in the States went for a more colourful drawing, but wasn't much better. "Don't judge a book by its cover" they say, but I suspect a lot of people did.

Ken Crossland **ken54@blueyonder.co.uk**

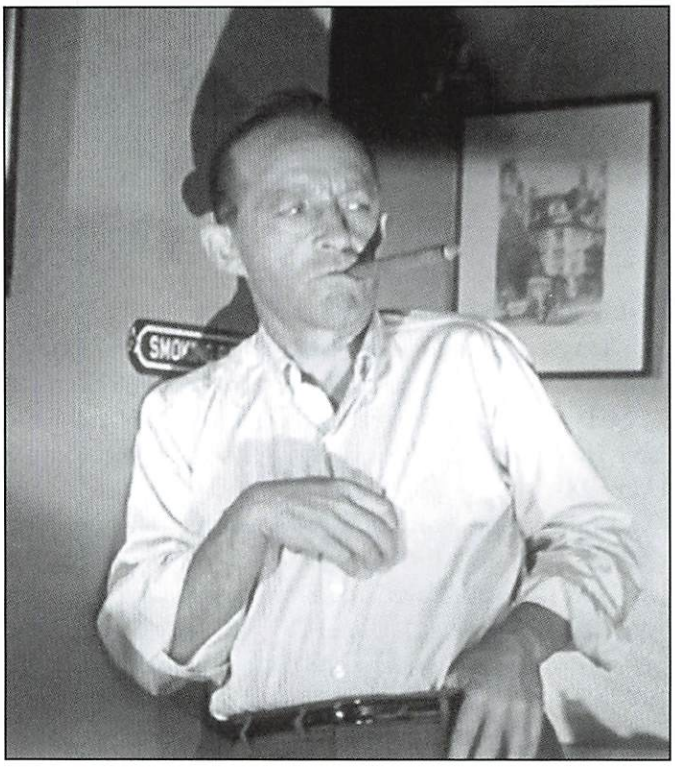
BING ON THE BOX

Malcolm Macfarlane surveys the TV and radio scene of the last four months.

TV highlights - USA & Canada

Bing's films and other items seen on TV since our last issue was prepared were:

High Time	FXM
Robin and the 7 Hoods	TCM



An unusual shot of Bing in *High Time* as he helps a fellow student revise for an examination.

I am working my way through the Amazon Prime series "The Man in the High Castle" and it was good to hear Bing's version of "Mack the Knife" being used in episode 6 of series one. Also in the third series of *Fargo*, Mr. Crosby popped up in episode 2 with his radio version of "The Christmas Song".

USA & Canadian Radio

Crosby Internet Radio

Crosby Internet Radio continues to broadcast 24/7. They are repeating the shows broadcast last year and they make very good listening indeed. The shows change on a monthly basis with the 15-minute 1954-56 show typically running throughout the day with other programs such as the Philco, Chesterfield and GE shows being interleaved every hour or so. The Crosby-Clooney shows are used frequently too.

Other USA shows

Arne Fogel's weekly radio program "The Bing Shift" is still being broadcast on Sundays at 8 p.m. (CST) on KBEM-FM "JAZZ 88" (88.5 FM) in Minneapolis & St. Paul, Minnesota. It can now be accessed on demand at http://www.jazz88.fm/on-demand/ and it's always enjoyable with an eclectic selection. Frans van der Kolff enthused about the program on the Crosby Fan World site in June saying "Really recommended!"

Jack Boyle's BING *for the SEASONS* show from Hudson Valley in New York State has had a different theme each month. In **March**, it was a Jazz FM Irish Toast with songs from the Irish Songbook by Bing, Rosemary Clooney, Anne Murray and Emmy Lou Harris amongst others. **April** had a "Swing into spring" with Bing singing "Easter Parade", "April Showers", "April in Portugal", "Where the Rainbow Ends" and many other appropriate songs. The program for **May** brought a slight change of direction with a "Big Band Special". The special guests were Roger Thorpe & The Sammy Kaye Orchestra playing a number of tracks

alongside Bing recordings like "Sweet Georgia Brown", "St. Louis Blues" and "She Is the Sunshine of Virginia". **June** heralded an "Escape to summer" with songs like "Summer Wind", "Watermelon Weather", "Two Shadows on the Sand" and "Return to Paradise".

The program airs twice monthly, the first Sunday of the month at 7 pm, with an Encore Presentation on the third Sunday of the month at 9 am ET on Hudson Valley Public Radio's JAZZ FM (and on the Internet at HVPR.ORG).

Greg Van Beek's weekly radio series Nostalgia Radio Time on 1420 AM WJUB has continued its long run on Saturday nights starting at 9 pm (CST) / 10 pm (ET). Greg always has a "Bing Sings" segment in the hour-long program. On March 4, he devoted the entire hour in tribute to the memory of New York radio legend Rich Conaty, host for over 40 years of *The Big Broadcast*. April 29 saw him celebrate Bing's 114th birthday with 17 songs by Der Bingle ranging from "Down by the River" through "Haunted Heart" to "Nevertheless". Greg finished the tribute with Bing and Rosie singing "Only Forever".

You can catch Greg online at the www.1420thebreeze.com site or you can listen to the previous two weeks shows by going to the website and clicking on the 'audio archives' link.

Frans van der Kolff drew our attention to *Afterglow* a weekly one-hour radio program of jazz and American popular song hosted by Mark Chilla and produced by WFIU Public Radio. An on demand program "Voices on the Air!" was available from March 24 on http://indianapublicmedia.org/afterglow/voices-air-bing-frank/ and this is how it was advertised.

> "For nearly 30 years when radio was king, two singers dominated the airwaves more than anyone else: Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. Both were pioneers of the medium—Bing just a few years ahead of Frank—and masters behind the microphone, able to translate the warmth and tenderness over the air like no other singer had done before. This week, I'll be featuring both Crosby and Sinatra in the way they were featured to millions of Americans in the 20th century, through their live radio broadcasts."

The program used a nice mixture of the two singers' radio songs from various recent CDs including "Bing & Rosie: The Crosby-Clooney Radio Sessions", "Here's Bing Crosby! Radio Broadcasts 1938-1946", "A Voice on Air (1935-1955)" and "Bing & Louis: Havin' Fun". The show may still be available at the link given above.

The **Star Spangled Radio Hour** can still be heard at http://www.cruisin1430.com/media/podcast/star-spangled-radio-hour and Bing pops up now and then. The Command Performance show of September 25, 1943 was heard on June 17 with Bing singing "Moonlight Bay" with the Charioteers and then "These Foolish Things" with Frances Langford.

TV highlights - UK

Crosby items seen since our last issue was prepared were:

Andy Williams – My Favourite Duets	Sky Arts
Discovering Bing Crosby	Sky Arts
Duets – The Andy Williams Show	BBC4
Holiday Inn	Film4
That's Entertainment!	BBC2
That's Entertainment! (Part 2)	BBC2
The Country Girl	Sky Greats

The BBC1 TV programme "Homes under the Hammer" used a couple of Bing tracks - "High Hopes" (Apr. 18) and "Beautiful Memories" (Apr. 20). The producer must be a Crosby fan! Another BBC1 show *Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is* used "Gone Fishin'" on May 16.

UK radio

The National Presenters

Songs played on the BBC national networks of which we were aware over the last four months were:

Clare Teal: Don't Fence Me In (Mar. 19) – Now You Has Jazz (Mar. 26) – Straight Down the Middle (May 28)

Elaine Paige on Sunday: Getting to Know You (Apr. 30)

Don Black: I Love You, Samantha (Mar. 5) – Long Ago (and Far Away) (June 25) (the latter song was played for Jason Liddiard and Don mentioned that the ICC was the longest running fan club in the world.)

Radio 2's Showtunes Playlist: I Love You, Samantha (Mar. 5 and June 25)

Paul O'Grady: Pennies from Heaven (May 14) – Swinging on a Star (May 21)

Radio 2's Jazz Playlist: Now You Has Jazz (June 13)

Vanessa Feltz: Among My Souvenirs (June 7)

Saturday Breakfast with Dermot: Gone Fishin' (May 6)

Geoffrey Smith's Jazz: (Radio3) – St. Louis Blues

Sounds of Cinema (Radio3) – Busy Doing Nothing (May 20)

Chris Hawkins (BBC Radio6): Swinging on a Star (June 15)

Gideon Coe (BBC Radio6): I'm an Old Cowhand (May 1)

Nice to see that our old friend **Russell Davies** returned to Radio2 on June 26 with his programme *The Russell Davies Archive* and he included Bing in his opening programme singing "Home Cookin'". He introduced Bing as "the biggest name in the singing business." I emailed Russell welcoming him back and thanking him for playing Mr. Crosby.

The local radio presenters

Gerald Jackson's two programmes on local radio - "Unforgettable" on Radio Lancashire on Sunday afternoons at 4 p.m. and the other the similarly named "Gerald Jackson: Unforgettable" on Radio Manchester on Sunday nights at 10pm continue to provide a Crosby bonanza. Each show runs for two hours and has a completely different play list. During the 4-month period until the end of June, Gerald played 24 Crosby tracks varying from "Paper Doll" to "Happy Feet" and on to "Goodnight, Sweet Dreams, Mary Lou".

I emailed Mr. Jackson to thank him for playing so many Crosby items and he read out my email on March 12 giving some nice publicity for the ICC.

Anne Hopper at BBC Radio Cumbria has been a staunch supporter of Bing by playing a host of Crosby songs throughout the years. Sadly this has now come to an end as Anne has relocated to the South of England. I wished her well for the future and thanked her for all she has done to keep The Groaner on the air.

Her last show was on April 15 and in the 6-weeks from March 1st, she played seven tracks by Mr. Crosby including "Snowbird", "Goodnight, Sweet Dreams, Mary Lou" and "Spring Will Be a Little Late This Year".

Anne's successor is John Lipscombe and already he has played a good number of Crosby tracks like "Mountain Greenery", "From the Top of Your Head" and "It Happened in Monterey". **Jason Liddiard** and I have made contact with him and will support him with requests and other information.

The Late Paul Barnes, the big band, jazz, two-hour show hosted by Paul over seven BBC local radio stations and on the Internet starting at 11 p.m. on Saturday nights fits in Bing tracks which are appropriate to the theme of his show. He has a regular monthly segment featuring the 2013 Crosby calendar (the last one we issued) when he plays the calendar song each time and usually adds another Crosby song or two on each occasion. **Stan White** is a regular supporter of the show and it was nice to hear Paul wish him "Happy birthday" on one broadcast. Paul used his May 6 show to link together trumpet players, Bing's birthday and the calendar using songs varying from "Changes" to "I've Got Five Dollars" to "Brother Bill". In all he played 16 songs in the period under review and he even made a tribute to the late Alice Ludes using "Hang Your Heart on a Hickory Limb " on his April 8 show.

BBC Radio Lincolnshire's **Howard Leader** has a programme of big band swing and balladeers which goes out each Sunday afternoon and Bing is featured regularly. I always finish my paragraph about Howard by saying "Wherever you are in the world, please email Howard with a Crosby request at *howard.leader@bbc.co.uk.*" Much to my delight our own **Graham Pascoe** from Bathurst in Australia did just that. Howard said that Graham had seen my reference to the show in BING magazine and the alternate take of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" was played for him. My sleeve notes for "Good and Rare – vol. 3" were used to explain the difference with the issued take. Graham Pascoe had also given details of the history of Bathurst which Howard duly passed on to his listeners. Stan White supports the programme too and he had a letter about the "New Tricks / Some Fine Old Chestnuts" release read out in one programme. In all Howard used 15 Bing songs in the 4-month period including "The Way You Look Tonight", "Mama Loves Papa" and "Be-Bop Spoken Here" (with Peggy Lee). There is a "Listen Again" option.

Bill Rennells ***Harmony Night*** show on BBC local radio stations throughout the South East of England and on the Internet is another presenter who is very happy to play Bing in response to requests. <u>But he does need requests!</u> Please join in and email Bill with your Bing requests to *bill.rennells@bbc.co.uk* so that we keep Bing's name to the fore in the South East of England. It's a three-hour broadcast starting at 10 p.m. on Sunday evenings and Bill also has a "Listen Again" option. In the 4-month period until the end of June, Bill played 13 Crosby tracks, nine of which were for Stan White, Ian Lawrence and me. Among the rarer items were "Goodnight, Sweet Dreams, Mary Lou", "With All My heart", "Send in the Clowns" and "Gonna Build a Mountain".

Unforgettable with Bob Roberts: (BBC Surrey) – Bob often plays a Bing song but he surpassed himself on May 14 with his 'Bing and Swing' with Bing Crosby show. Eight songs were played including rarer items like "Have a Nice Day" and "Gentle on My Mind".

I thanked Bob by email for the broadcast and he asked us to submit an "Ultimate Crosby" list which we have done. He plans to have a month of Bing in October as his featured artist, spotlighting different aspects of his long career. This fits in nicely with the 40th anniversary of Bing's passing.

****

As usual, I've had a look at the BBC website to see what other Crosby songs have been played in the last

four months. Although not all the presenters use the site, the following have been shown as being played on the local BBC radio stations. Most of these shows have a "listen again" facility. Why not drop a line to your local radio station and ask for a Bing record to be played to note 40 years since Bing's passing? It only takes a minute or two to fire off an email. Also, please thank the presenters for playing Bing.

Beverley Humphreys presents *Beverley's World of Music*: (BBC Radio Wales) – Beverley plays Bing quite often and she used nine Crosby items in the period under review, including songs such as "Too Marvellous for Words" and "Zing a Little Zong". I wrote to Beverly thanking her for playing our man and she duly read out my email on her March 26 show and promoted the ICC.
Chris Needs: (BBC Radio Wales) – Swinging on a Star (June 7)
David Allen: (BBC Radio Surrey) – Between a Kiss and a Sigh (May 6) – A Little Love and Understanding (May 27)
Sean Coyle: (Radio Foyle) – McNamara's Band (Mar. 17) and (May 26)
Get It On...with Bryan Burnett: (Radio Scotland) – Straight Down the Middle (June 19)
Graham Pass: (BBC Wiltshire) – They All Laughed (Apr. 9) – Give Me the Simple Life (Apr. 30)
Jazz Nights at the Quay: (Radio Scotland) – Straight Down the Middle (May 7)
Kerry McLean: (Radio Ulster) – Some Enchanted Evening (Apr. 11)
My London (Radio London) – The Bells of St. Mary's (June 3)
Neil Foster: (BBC Radio York) – Well, Did You Evah! (Apr. 2) – True Love (Apr. 30)
Nick Risby (BBC Radio Suffolk): – Straight Down the Middle (Mar. 24)
Roy Noble: (BBC Radio Wales) – Good, Good, Good (Mar. 26) – Don't Fence Me In (Apr.23) – But Not for Me (May 21) – Swinging on a Star (June 4)
Michael Poulter: (BBC Tees) – Honeysuckle Rose (Mar. 19) – Mama Loves Papa (Mar. 26)
Gaby Roslin: (BBC Radio London) – I've Got Rhythm
Sunday Club with John Bennett: (Radio Ulster) – My Blue Heaven (June 4)
The Country Show (with Joe Wilson): (Radio Lancashire) – Ridin' Down the Canyon (June 18)

Australia

Each Monday morning from 9 to 11 (Australian Eastern Time) ICC member Graham Pascoe presents 'Morning Music' on community radio station 2MCE-FM, located in Bathurst, New South Wales on the campus of Charles Sturt University. Mostly he plays recordings of popular music from the 1930s, 40s and 50s, many of which were originally featured in stage or movie musicals. Needless to say, he usually plays a couple of Crosby recordings. The station broadcasts on 92.3 FM in Bathurst and its programs are streamed (but not archived) on www.2mce.org.

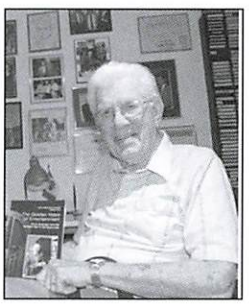
John Funnell's "I've Heard That Song Before" from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. every Wednesday on WNY FM 88.9 features Hollywood and Broadway favourites. It includes Bing every week and the show can be heard online at www.wynfm.org.au/. Previous shows can be accessed too.

The Golden Days community radio station on 95.7 FM in Victoria continues to have a half-hour programme at 3.00 p.m. on Wednesday afternoons which broadcasts a Bing Crosby tribute each week. This is presented by Carol Farman.

Other radio programmes featuring our man are Peter O'Brien's "Music Showcase" on Eastern FM 98.1 (Mondays 12 noon to 2 p.m.) Loris Young's show on 3WBC FM 94.1 (Tuesdays 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.) has plenty of Crosby too.

Malcolm Macfarlane macwilmslo@aol.com

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

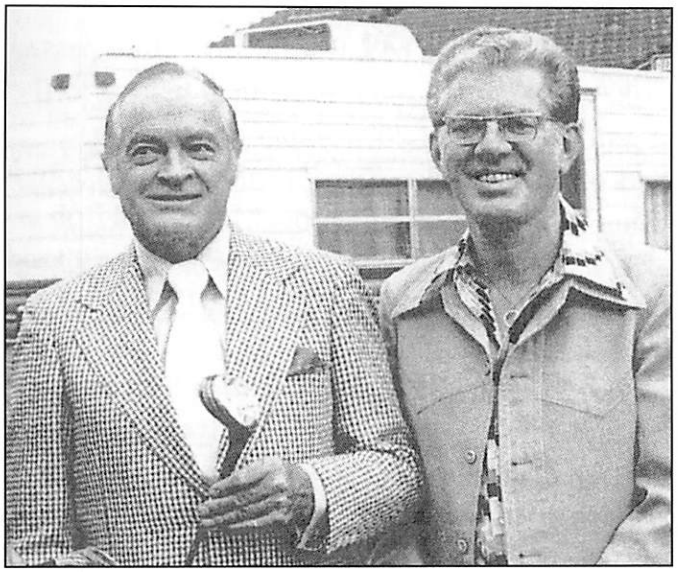


Gord recalls one of the greatest show business partnerships in this excerpt from his latest book.

Crosby and Hope, Hope and Crosby, their names were synonymous. They were two of the most popular and enduring stars of all time. Together they were the screen's most successful comedy team. Like their song, "Put It There Pal" suggested, they were a perfect blend, "like meat and potatoes or salt and tomatoes." Their comedy exchanges and self-deprecating humour seemed timeless. Their popularity in movies and on radio and TV was unprecedented.

There has not been a time in my life that I was not aware of Bing Crosby and Bob Hope. I have been one of their countless fans since my formative years when I listened faithfully to their weekly radio shows.

Over the years I was fortunate to interview and socialize with them on a number of occasions. In fact, one time while visiting Bob's home with Rich Little he surprised me by telling Rich that he not only knew me, but that we had "worked together." He obviously meant that I had interviewed him several times. However, I revelled in the thought that we had actually "worked together."



Bob was always impressed with my total recall of his and Bing's careers. Once when I mentioned the background behind a funny but obscure scene in one of their movies, he said in amazement, "How do you know that?" I got a big laugh from him when I replied that I knew their lives better than my own.

Bing was 74 when he left us in 1977. Bob passed away one month after his 100th birthday in 2003. Now they belong to the ages in film and broadcast retrospectives of 20th century pop culture.

The stars of the hilarious *'Road'* comedies were born in the same month in 1903, Bing in Tacoma, Washington, May 3, and Bob in Eltham, England, May 29. Their families moved while they were still toddlers, the Crosbys to neighbouring Spokane and the Hopes to Cleveland, Ohio. Both families had seven children.

I was indeed privileged to be a friend to both of my boyhood idols and to produce radio anthologies about their lives and legendary careers. I was greatly honoured in 1981 to be the emcee for the unveiling of a bronze statue honouring Bing at his alma mater Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA. In 2003 I returned to Gonzaga as the emcee of a centennial tribute to Bing.

Throughout the dark days of the 1940s Hope and Crosby were not only the two biggest stars in the entertainment world, but also the top comedy team in show business, with their zany *'Road'* movies, radio shows and tireless touring for the war effort. "We had a lot of respect for one another," Bob remembered fondly, "As you know he had a great sense of humour and we had a lot of fun and travelled extensively together. I guess we played at least a hundred exhibition games of golf for charities around the world."

During one of my conversations with Bing, he recalled their initial encounter: "I first met Bob at the Capitol Theatre in New York where we were on the same bill. He was doing an act with a girl who played straight for him and he was a wise-cracking comedian. I was just starting out as one of the Rhythm Boys and we used to go together to The Friars Club where all the actors hung out. I saw a lot of Bob in those days and we have been great friends ever since."

Four years later they were reunited at the Capital Theatre. "We were back in New York in 1932," Bob told me. "I was the emcee and Bing was the headliner – he was a radio and recording star by that time. We were there for two weeks doing four shows a day. By the second week we started adlibbing and we worked up an impromptu act. Five years later I was signed by Paramount and moved to California. A short time after my arrival I went down to Del Mar Race track, where Bing was one of the owners, and at his invitation, attended one of their Saturday night parties. We got up and did the same act we did at the Capital Theatre. A couple of guys from Paramount who were there thought we really worked well together. They thought we were adlibbing. That was 1939 and that's how the *'Roads'* started. We made seven of them."

On their well-travelled 'roads' there was as much comedy on the sets as there was on the screen. "We did a lot of adlibbing," Bob admitted. "The great writers of the pictures, Hartman and Butler, who did a wonderful job preparing the scripts, used to walk on the set and we would say, 'If you hear one of your lines yell Bingo!' Bing and I would add our own material and once in a while lose some of their lines, but the wonderful construction they did for those pictures always came through."

Bing was never happier than when he was working with Bob. He remembered those happy times as we reminisced at his home in Hillsboro, California: "The most satisfying movies to me were the *'Road'* pictures. I believe they provided people with a lot of fun. They were a pleasure to make with Bob and Dorothy Lamour."

It was while taping my last interview with Bob, that in a wistful moment, he reflected warmly on the legacy of his old pal and comedy partner: "The marvellous thing about Bing is that we still have his wonderful

recordings and films and they are permanent. They will be here when we are gone and that's a comforting thought."

Hollywood's "Rover Boys" travelled their last road in 1962 to Hong Kong. But their images are as alive today as in the past with frequent showings on TV of their comedy classics. Bing is still the charming fast-talking con man and Bob, as always, is his shill and gullible accomplice. They remain forever young, forever our "Sunshine Boys."

Gord Atkinson

(Editor: Gord's radio tributes to Bing and Bob won prestigious international awards from Columbia University and the US National Catholic Association of Broadcasters and are revisited in his new book "The Golden Years of Entertainment". The book is available to Crosby collectors for $20.00 US or Canadian funds or equivalent in British pounds. His mailing address is: 14 Castle Harbour Court, Stittsville, ON K2S 1B9 Canada.)

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Don Rickles, the American stand-up comedian and actor, died on April 6 at the age of 90. Best known as an insult comic, his pudgy, balding appearance, and pugnacious style led to few leading roles in film or television; his prominent film roles included *Run Silent, Run Deep* (1958) and *Kelly's Heroes* (1970), and beginning in 1976 he enjoyed a two-year run starring in the sitcom *C.P.O. Sharkey*. He received widespread exposure as a popular guest on numerous talk shows, including *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson* and *Late Show with David Letterman*, and later voice roles in films notably included playing Mr. Potato Head in the *Toy Story* series. He won a Primetime Emmy Award for the 2007 documentary *Mr. Warmth: The Don Rickles Project*.

Rickles is said to have been a drinking friend of Gary Crosby and in fact he acted as best man when Gary married Barbara Stuart on September 6, 1960. Gary wrote about the experience:

> When I notified the old man about my wedding plans he was about to leave for Rome. He fired off a quick note advising me to take my time and be sure I'd made the right choice.
>
> Well, I hadn't taken my time, and I wasn't sure about much.
>
> Oh, I was sure I loved Barbara and wanted to marry her, but I didn't think it would last. I figured it might take her a month or two to get tired of me and then she'd dump me real quick, so I played the whole thing for laughs. I rented the Bugsy Siegel Suite at the Flamingo Hotel for the ceremony. Don Rickles was my best man. When we went to buy the wedding bands he was so nervous he dropped a trayful of rings on the floor and was doing one-liners while we were down on our hands and knees trying to put them back. Then he had me bouncing off the walls with his *tummel* to the jewelry store owner.
>
> "Want a ring at a discount. The kid doesn't have much. His old man's got all the money. You're gonna have to wait for the big score. Come on, *landsman,* haven't you got something nice at a better price?"
>
> When the elevator carrying Barbara and her maid of honor up to the ceremony broke down, I was certain she had run out on me. Rickles and I were pacing the carpet in our suits, watching the minutes tick by, when he turned to me and wisecracked, "Well, I think she got smart. I think somebody told her something at the last minute, and she's on her way to Mexico." "Probably," I answered, trying to conjure up a smile. Finally she arrived, and the judge married us.
>
> (Gary Crosby and Ross Firestone, *Going My Own Way*, page 267)

Rickles only involvement with Bing himself was in 1975 when Rickles was hosting the *Tonight Show* in the absence of Johnny Carson. Bing had been recording an appearance on a Bob Hope Special in an adjoining studio. Greg Van Beek described the event in a posting on the Bing Crosby Internet Museum, October 29, 2001.

> The 10/15/75 appearance was (seemingly) spontaneous; Bing, Hope and the Duke were all taping Hope's "25 Years on Television" TV special (which aired Oct. 24, 1975, 9 days after this *Tonight* Show appearance) across the hall at NBC in Burbank from where the *Tonight* Show was being taped. First Hope walked in, unannounced, to thunderous applause. Then Bing ambled in, to even greater applause. Finally John Wayne came in and brought the house down! They all went over to have a seat next and a little chat. Bing got off a good ad lib to the usually caustic guest host Don Rickles. Bing brought a copy of the book "The Crosby:

Greatest Show in Golf" to give to host Johnny Carson, but Carson was not there. Rickles said to Bing "Bing, this is television!" And to the audience, Rickles said "Bing is still waiting for the Kraft Music Hall to come back". Hope quipped to Rickles, in mock disgust, "Aren't we all". Bing took one look at Rickles and said "I thought Mr. Carson would be here, but I'll have to take what I got". A memorable little segment.

Adam West, best known for playing Batman in the popular 1960s television series, died on June 9, 2017, at the age of 88. Born in 1928 in Walla Walla, Washington as William West Anderson, he adopted the stage name Adam West and made his feature film debut with a small but memorable part in the 1959 drama *The Young Philadelphians* (starring Paul Newman). He enjoyed a steady stream of supporting parts in television and film over the next several years, among them a recurring role as Sergeant Steve Nelson on the hit TV series *The Detectives*. On the big screen, he played the straight man to the Three Stooges in the 1965 Western spoof *The Outlaws is Coming*, and that year he also headlined the spaghetti Western *The Relentless Four*.

West's big break came when he was chosen to play the crime-fighting superhero Batman in a television adaptation of the comic book. He played Batman during the popular TV show's run from 1966 to 1968. Following its debut in January 1966, the popularity of *Batman* swelled to a phenomenal level, making household names of West and Burt Ward as Robin. Despite its initial popularity however, escalating production costs and flagging ratings caused ABC to cancel *Batman* midway through its third season, in 1968.

West went on to star in such films as *The Girl Who Knew Too Much* (1969), but typecasting all but brought his career to a halt. Describing his post-Batman years in a later interview, he said, "I did a couple of fairly good movies, but then I could see what was happening. Every time the audience would see me come into a scene, you could hear an intake of breath and it would be like, 'There's Batman.'" In search of work, West was reduced to making guest appearances as Batman at county fairs and rodeos. He voiced the character for a couple of animated programs, and occasionally landed supporting parts in quality films like the action-laced comedy *Hooper* (1978). Otherwise, he accepted roles in forgettable features like *The Happy Hooker Goes Hollywood* (1980) and *Zombie Nightmare* (1986). He enjoyed a resurgence alongside the revival of the *Batman* franchise in the 1990s, and later delivered voiceover work for the animated sitcom *Family Guy* and the Disney feature *Chicken Little*.

The Crosby connection? He appeared on the Hollywood Palace show hosted by Bing and broadcast on December 19, 1967. He took part in a sketch and sang "The Children's Marching Song" (aka "This Old Man") with the Crosby children.

Bill Dana, the comedian, actor, and screenwriter, famed for his role as a heavily accented Bolivian character named José Jiménez died on June 15 at the age of 92. Born William Szathmary in Quincy, Massachusetts, he was of Hungarian-Jewish descent and took his stage name "Dana" after his mother's first name "Dena" as he felt "Szathmary" was unpronounceable. During World War II he served in the United States Army with the 263rd Infantry Regiment, 66th Infantry Division as a 60mm mortarman and machine gunner, as well as an unofficial interpreter. Dana began his career as a page at NBC's famous Studio 6B while performing comedy in nightclubs around New York with partner Gene Wood. In the 1950s, he performed on *The Imogene Coca Show*, *The Danny Thomas Show* and *The Martha Raye Show*, as well as writing for and producing *The Spike Jones Show*.

His career took a major turn when he began writing stand-up routines for the young comedian Don Adams, including the now well-known "Would you believe?" jokes popularized by *Get Smart*. From there, he was brought in as a writer for *The Steve Allen Show*, where he created the José Jiménez character for the show's "Man in the Street" segments. In 1961, Dana made the first of eight appearances on *The Danny Thomas Show*, playing Jimenez as a bumbling but endearing bellhop. The character was so well-received that it was spun off into his own NBC sitcom, *The Bill Dana Show* (1963–1965). Jiménez was still a bellhop, but now at a posh New York hotel. He appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show* several times and on the *Hollywood Palace* show broadcast on November 26, 1966 when Bing and he indulged in some comedy dialogue together. In time however, many people saw José as a reinforcement of negative stereotypes, and by 1970, Mr. Dana had stopped performing as José — he even read the character's obituary at an event in Los Angeles sponsored by the Congress of Mexican-American Unity — though he insisted that he made that decision not because of mounting anger about the character but because some people were misinterpreting his intentions.

THE WAY WE WERE

The section of the magazine where we look at what Bing was doing in years gone by.

100 YEARS AGO

The summer vacation at Gonzaga High School began on June 14, 1917 and Harry Crosby (aged 14) could take pride in having achieved distinctions in History, English, and Christian Doctrine in First Year

High, Division One. His brother, Everett, by then a book keeper at the Montana Power Company in Lewiston, Montana, had enlisted in the Cavalry and was eventually posted to France where he became a sergeant in an artillery battery. On June 19 and 20, Al Jolson appeared at the Auditorium, Spokane, in *Robinson Crusoe Jr.* and Bing had a job backstage as a property boy. The local paper liked the show.

Jolson Takes House by Storm
Not since McIntyre and Heath came in "The Ham Tree" has blackface comedy been so embellished and exalted as in "Robinson Crusoe Jr.", Al Jolson's new show from the Winter Garden, which began a two night's engagement at the Auditorium last night… Mr. Jolson is, of course, the majority of the show, and he has never appeared to better advantage than in the role of Gus and "Good Friday." His spontaneous and inimitable methods and his dynamic style of singing captured this house from the moment of his appearance…
(*Spokane Daily Chronicle*, June 20, 1917)

The character "Gus" was a shrewd black servant who solves the many problems presented to him. Bing was spellbound by Jolson's energetic performance and as he told George O'Reilly in 1961, "I hung on every word and watched every move he made. To me, he was the greatest entertainer who ever lived."

75 YEARS AGO

May 5, 1942 saw Bing (aged 39) joining the Hollywood Victory Caravan which we covered in depth in our previous issue. Back in Los Angeles on May 21, he returned to the *Kraft Music Hall* for six weeks before departing for a short break prior to touring army camps. Guests on KMH included Carole Landis, Frank McHugh, Ruth Hussey, John Garfield, Thomas Mitchell, Donald Crisp, Linda Darnell, Walt Disney, Harry James and Fred Astaire. Bob Crosby took over for the summer months.

During the last days of May, Bing was busy recording the songs from *Holiday Inn* including on May 29 a song called "White Christmas"! The initial reaction from the trade paper *Billboard* was favourable.

Bing Crosby - White Christmas
This beautiful song from Irving Berlin's *Holiday Inn* score is seemingly destined to be one of the big hits of the winter season. Because it deals with Christmas, the publishers have not been allowing it to be played on the air and have not been encouraging its sale. A few towns, however, have gobbled it up, air-plugging or no air-plugging. This is a pretty good sign that when the "drive" starts for this song it will hop to the top with ease.
(*Billboard*, September 19, 1942)

How right they were! A few days afterwards the groaner was involved in car crash at 12:03 a.m. on Wilshire Boulevard at Roxbury Drive. He received minor injuries including a cut lip and was treated at Beverly Hills Emergency Hospital and sent home. Later that morning, he recorded three more songs from *Holiday Inn* including "Be Careful, It's My Heart" which was expected to be the big hit from the film. "Be Careful" duly entered the charts on August 22 and reached a peak position of No. 2 during its 15 weeks in the *Billboard* list. Decca also issued a 78rpm album of the 12 songs from the Irving Berlin score and this was warmly welcomed with *Billboard* saying: "Album finishes in a blaze of vocal glory, most impressive in Bing Crosby's plaintive appeal for a *White Christmas*, assisted by the Ken Darby Singers and Trotter's music."

June 8 saw Der Bingle recording "Silent Night" and "Adeste Fideles" and on June 12 he recorded "Moonlight Becomes You". The last-named song spent two weeks at the top of the *Billboard* charts during its 17 weeks sojourn in the lists. In the space of three weeks Bing had recorded some of the most important songs of his career.

In June, he made the first of many appearances on the *Command Performance* shows, he lent his support to the Scrap Rubber Drive and he appeared in the Gershwin Memorial Concert at the Shrine Auditorium with Dinah Shore where he and Dinah sang a medley from *Porgy and Bess* in front of 6500 people.

Promoting the Scrap Rubber Drive.

The setting up of $50,000 trust funds given by Bing for each of his four sons was completed in Probate Court and John O'Melveny, the family attorney, was appointed to look after the trusts which consisted of stock in the Crosby Corporation. The sons were to receive their respective trust fund when they reached the age of twenty-one.

July found Bing teaming up with Bob Hope for a golf match at Salt Lake City with the profits going to the

Army Benefit Fund at Fort Douglas. Bing and Bob gave a short impromptu show just off the eighteenth green after the match before going to the bombing and gunnery camp at Wendover to give a performance for the servicemen. Jimmy Van Heusen accompanied Bing at both shows.

The American Federation of Musicians commenced a recording ban by its members on August 1 which continued until September 18, 1943, in the case of Decca. Elsewhere, Bing joined USO Camp Show unit #32 with Phil Silvers and Rags Ragland and their show "Full Speed Ahead" which began a tour at Camp Lewis, Washington and went on to Tacoma, Seattle, Fort Warren, Camp Carson and Denver. Bing and Bob Hope joined up to play benefit golf matches along the way

Bing's film *Holiday Inn* had a charity premiere for the benefit of the Navy Relief Society on August 4 at the Paramount, New York and went on to take $3.75 million in rental income in its initial release period in the USA. The reviews were excellent:

> Paramount has decided to 'special' this Irving Berlin filmusical, and rightly so. It's a standout film. With those Berlin tunes, a strong story content and Bing Crosby and Fred Astaire for the marquee, it's an undeniable boxoffice parlay, a winner all the way....The production is ultra, and the musical interpretations, with Bob Crosby's Bobcats backing up brother Bing, make the song idioms ultra-modern.
> (*Variety*, June 17, 1942)

> The best musical drama of the year.
> *(New York Post)*

At the end of August, Bing and many other Hollywood celebrities arrived at Union Station, Washington D.C. to take part in the Bureau of Public Relations Washington Show at the National Theatre before an audience of 1000 top ranking government and army officials plus 800 soldiers. After a war bond rally in front of a crowd of 30,000, Bing departed for a 3-week tour entertaining at army camps and playing benefit golf matches.

50 YEARS AGO

During May 1967, Bing (now aged 64) and Kathryn had been spending time at their home in Las Cruces, Baja California. They returned to Hillsborough at the end of the month and then had a disagreement over Kathryn's decision to star in *The Guardsman* at the Drury Lane Theatre in Chicago for eight weeks. Bing had previously arranged to go to Europe for a month and had expected Kathryn to accompany him.

Bing flew to England where he golfed, went to the races and met some of his fans. He then flew to Gibraltar and then travelled to Marbella in Spain for several days. Returning to London, he attended Royal Ascot, having drinks with Princess Margaret in the Royal Box. He went on to Ireland to see his horse "Dominion Day" run in the Irish Sweeps Derby but found on his arrival that the horse had been scratched from the race by his trainer Paddy Prendergast. Instead he golfed at Killarney and then flew home at the end of June.

Kathryn was still in *The Guardsman* so Bing and the children went to the Rising River ranch in Northern California for a few days. On July 14, he took Harry and Mary Frances to the Big Island in Hawaii for ten days before returning to Los Angeles to star in a *Danny Thomas Hour* called "The Demon under the Bed" for NBC-TV.

Filming "The Demon under the Bed".

In August, Bing flew to Tanzania with Phil Harris, Clint Walker and Texas Governor John Connally to film an *American Sportsman* program about sand grouse in the Northern Highlands. On his way home, Mr. Crosby called in at the Curragh Racecourse, Co. Kildare, Ireland to see his horse "Dominion Day" win the Blandford Stakes. The month ended with Bing taping the opening *Hollywood Palace* show of the 1967/68 season with Jimmy Durante, Ravi Shankar, Diahann Carroll, Joey Heatherton, and Milton Berle. The show was televised on September 5.

KEEPING TRACK

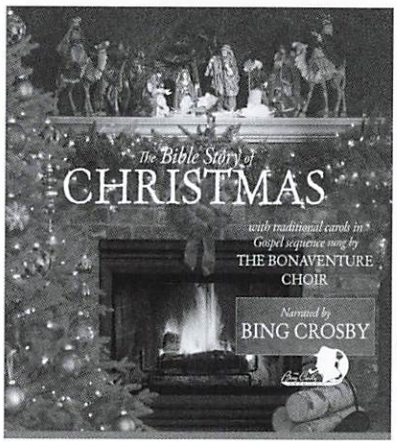
Richard Baker brings us up-to-date.

COMPACT DISCS

The Bible Story of Christmas World Library Publications CD WLP 07403 - $10.
Also available as an LP. WLP 07405 - $25
Reading by Bing of verses 4-20 from Chapter 2 of the Gospel of Luke with hymns and carols sung by The Bonaventure Choir.
Online orders can be made from the following websites - CD - http://www.wlp.jspaluch.com/16811.htm
LP - http://www.wlp.jspaluch.com/16807.htm Outside the US contact wlpmusic.com or phone 1-800-566-6150

We are all familiar with Bing's speaking voice via radio, TV, and film but there is not very much of it on formal studio recordings. Here we have one of the examples, quite short (extending to just 2 minutes 29 seconds), but very important to his beliefs and that of millions of others. Bing, a believer, reads part of the story that is a cornerstone of Christianity and which is retold in some form every Christmas in thousands of churches of many Christian denominations around the world. The circumstances of the recording throw light on Bing's philanthropy and beliefs. I quote from the press release –

> "Sometime in 1955, Omer Westendorf (founder of World Library of Sacred Music) wrote to several famous Catholics to find a narrator for a recording project. Among those names were Loretta Young, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Rocky Marciano, and Bing Crosby. Bishop Sheen replied that he was too busy, and there were no replies from Ms. Young and Mr. Marciano. Bing Crosby made inquiries about World Library of Sacred Music through the Los Angeles Chancery Office. He made no formal reply and just sent a tape of the narration. Bing made the recording on August 6, 1956, and sent it to Omer Westendorf in Cincinnati. - - Bing donated his services and did not accept any payment."



The format of the LP was to have a verse or two of Bing's reading introducing appropriate hymns or carols, eight in all (Behold a Virgin Bearing Him; Silent Night; The First Nowell; A Child Is Born in Bethlehem; Angels We Have Heard on High; O Come, Little Children; Welcome, Son of Mary; and O Come All Ye Faithful/Adeste Fideles) sung by the Bonaventure Choir with soloists. The reissued CD repeats that format but also includes as a ninth track the original uncut reading, so you get it twice. The original LP had limited circulation but digital copies have circulated for some time. "Mr Christmas" supplied us with many carols and Christmas themed songs, so here is something rather different for your Christmas. The recording is listed in most discographies and many collectors will wish to fill the gap whatever their religious beliefs. There is of course no musical contribution from Bing but as a whole the recording is a very welcome addition and variant on Bing's Christmas themed material, with a stronger religious slant. Whilst the issue is from World Library Publications, it has had the support of Bing Crosby Enterprises and carries their logo.

The Chronological Crosby series.

I have previously mentioned the continuing availability of part of the Chronological series in new, sealed wrappers on eBay, both US and UK. At the time of writing this remains true. The ultimate seller is VIP Music Merchant, Block 61b, The Whittle Estate, Cambridge Road, Whetstone, Leicester, LE8 6LH, UK. This is a record merchant selling at music fairs held regularly in large towns around the UK. A visit to a fair will save on postage, which could become significant for a large purchase, but it might be wise to check that they will be carrying their stocks of Bing before attending a fair. Direct purchase enquiries are referred to the "eBay shop" though I suppose they might give a positive response to a direct request for larger orders. Stocks are limited and do not extend to the full sequence. The website at http://www.vip-24.com/ gives dates and venues for forthcoming fairs. Contact via e-mail mm@vip-24.com or phone 0116 275 2815. Prices quoted on eBay are £2.99 each, (about $3:77) and mailing for a single CD within the UK is £1:50 whilst to the USA is about $4.00.

VINYL

Fool's Gold. *'Bing & Satchmo'* and *'El Senor Bing'*

Richard Muirhead has drawn attention to two 12 inch vinyl discs on the DOL label. DOL is part of Russian based business, with associated names Waxtime and Vinylogy. They specialise in primarily jazz oriented material, much from the 1960s.

In the days of vinyl LP's the quality of the medium became more and more refined with the introduction of such things as thicker, heavyweight pressings (intended to reduce the risk of warping and with other claimed advantages), and the use of 45rpm instead of 33rpm on a standard 12 inch platter, among other things to enhance high frequency capacity. Even before these innovations the best LPs achieved a frequency range in excess of that which can be reached by CDs, which are limited technically to about 20,000 Hz. It is natural that such methods be re-adopted now that vinyl is regaining popularity, particularly as the concept is aimed at the dedicated audiophile.

Both these issues are, as promoted with some emphasis, on heavyweight (180 gram) vinyl with silent surfaces, whilst the second has been mastered at 45rpm. So far, so good, and the headline claim is met. However to promote discs in this way should be a badge of quality, indicating that such treatment is worthwhile and being lavished on a generally superior product such that dynamics, frequency range, and distortion all represent an improvement over the standard. To reach these high standards the discs must be mastered from the original tapes or something very close to them. Any copying automatically introduces degradation. I am sure that DOL do not have access to any such masters and to be fair they don't claim it but what otherwise is the point of the heavyweight silent vinyl other than to deceive? I used several software tools as well as my own ears to analyse 'El Senor Bing' in detail. There is no measurable audio content above 11,000 Hz whilst my original standard production LP reaches over twice that. There is a cut off in the bass region and reduced dynamic range. To compensate, the mid-range has been enhanced to give a feeling of clarity and the mastering has been done at a relatively high level. This might give a certain "punch". Superficially the result sounds clear and bright but closer listening on halfway decent equipment shows many shortcomings. Bing's sibilants are unclear (Ssh instead of Ssss), the orchestral parts are smeared and squashed, with percussion and brass lacking attack, the whole sounding restricted with a lack of the "depth" and "space" expected. The best available MP3 digital format is 320kbps, but even that is very compressed compared to the coding of standard CDs and other digital formats such as WAV and FLAC. I fed a couple of tracks through an audio analyzer which showed that they had been compressed to about 192kbps. That is the equivalent of 96kbps per stereo channel, a serious loss of audio signal as well as a source of distortion. In short this issue falls very far short of the standard audio quality of both LP and CD and is also significantly worse than most normal modern digital formats. It is as if a car maker had put a Ferrari body around a 100cc two stroke engine.

Whilst there are one or two positive comments on the Amazon site I fear the reviewers must suffer from a lack of audio awareness or were listening on something very "lo-fi". Richard Muirhead also pointed to a discussion group on the Discogs site, where the comments are more perceptive and include mention of "technical trickery" and the "technical sound" of discs from this source, with a suggestion that they could be mastered from MP3 copies. I think that view is correct. The sleeves incidentally are accurate replications of the originals, apart from the replacement of the original label's identification with the DOL insignia. The "Bing & Satchmo" pressing lacks "Lazy River".

DVDs and BLU-RAY

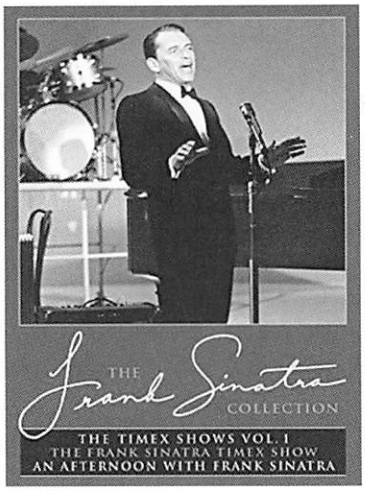
Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In **Time Life** **38 DVDs $249:95**

Order direct from the Time Life website Timelife.com but others also offer the set.

No clear regional coding is stated but I assume Region 1

Greg Van Beek writes that Time-Life have just released a DVD box set of the complete Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In TV series covering 140 episodes. Bing has a number of brief cameo appearances scattered throughout just four episodes – those of 17th November 1969, 19th January 1970, 14th December 1970 and 13th December 1971 but does not appear on the 22nd February 1971 episode as listed in the "Bing on TV" file. The shows all aired on NBC-TV. However Greg comments that Bing's cameos were so brief that all of them put together wouldn't even last 5 minutes in length, so it seems to me that you'd need to be a dedicated "laugh-in" fan to want the set. Bing was never a featured guest star on the series. If the producer had succeeded in getting Bing into the studio why not get him to do a little more – the odd comic song perhaps? An odd example of such a major star being so under-used.

The Timex Shows Vol. 1: The Frank Sinatra Timex Show & An Afternoon with Frank Sinatra
Eagle Rock Entertainment Catalog No.: EREDV1278
Around $6:80 (US) £9 (UK)



The Amazon US site states Region 1 whilst European sites state "region free".
Frank Sinatra's fans continue to be well served with this release which covers his first two Timex TV shows from the late fifties, the first of which has Bing as guest.
The Frank Sinatra Timex Show – First broadcast by ABC on October 19, 1959, apart from Bing the guests are Dean Martin, Mitzi Gaynor and Jimmy Durante. Items with Bing are:
1) High Hopes (Bing, Dean, Mitzi) 3) Together, Wherever We Go (Frank, Bing, Dean) 6) Cheek to Cheek (Bing, Dean, Mitzi,) 8) Medley: Good Old Songs/Down By the Old Mill Stream/The Old Gray Mare/In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree/That Old Feeling/Down the Old Ox Road/Old Rockin' Chair/Old Devil Moon/You're an Old Smoothie/My Old Flame/Ol' Man River (Frank, Bing, Dean,) 11) Medley: Start Each Day with a Song/Inka Dinka Doo/Bill Bailey, Won't You Please Come Home (Frank, Bing, Dean, Mitzi, Jimmy)

The second show, 'An Afternoon with Frank Sinatra' from December 13, 1959 has as guests The Hi-Lo's, Ella Fitzgerald, Hermione Gingold, Peter Lawford and Juliet Prowse.

Crosby in Search Of Crosby - Bing: The Truth Behind The Legend
Produced and presented by Chris Crosby (Bob Crosby's son). Previously available exclusively to subscribers to Amazon Prime for streaming but now also offered to rent ($2:99 or £2:49) or buy ($9:99 or £7:99). (Non Prime subscribers can have a free one month trial).

In the last issue of "BING" I covered this production by Bing's nephew Chris. Because of acute time pressures I was at best perfunctory, and after a short period of thought, together with a second viewing, I feel it appropriate to add a few further thoughts.

It is said that Chris has "spent a lifetime documenting testimony from those who loved and knew Bing best". From this we might expect an in-depth and careful analysis of Bing as a person and performer with contributions from a wide range of family and friends covering his life as a whole. However in that expectation we are doomed to disappointment, because what we have are reminiscences from Bob Hope and Phil Harris which in the main cover well examined ground, with a number of individual anecdotes from a number of co-stars, mainly from early times, which are variously interesting or amusing in limited ways. The film clips included are mainly early and the illustrative connection tends to be built on associations of rather superficial ideas rather than to illustrate deeper points. The only extended and totally new item from a person who was likely to be close to Bing for any length of time is that from brother Bob. It adds something to our knowledge but also gives Bob a platform to grind an axe about another member of the family rather than Bing himself. Quite why I can only guess but it hardly represents a balanced view. I cannot see how Stewart Granger and Terry Moore fit into the overall story (did they really "know Bing best"?) and cannot help thinking that they are there to pad things out.

The part in which members of Bob Crosby's family demonstrate their own talents is certainly padding and has no place here. More importantly I cannot see how this production can possibly live up to its promise without any coverage of and from a large part of Bing's own family or those with whom he collaborated for a lengthy period. Indeed Bing's life, professional and personal, from the mid-1950s onward is almost wholly ignored with key individuals not even getting a mention. During the period in which the documentary is said to have been in preparation many others who could have made material contributions were still around. Family apart, outstanding among them was of course Rosemary Clooney, but there are others – not only performers but orchestra leaders, producers and even those who themselves undertook research and analysis of some sort. Bing, as the towering entertainer for a large part of the last century deserves in-depth treatment on film. A video equivalent of Gary Giddins' book is perhaps too much to expect but this clumsy, lopsided and carelessly put together effort cannot be taken seriously and falls very far short the promise. At best it is a source of a number of anecdotes.

STREAMING AND DOWNLOAD SERVICES

In April announcements appeared in some newspapers that the music streaming business Spotify has signed a new, long-term, deal with Universal Music Group. Spotify has been trying to sign similar long-term deals with big labels, including Sony and Warner, ahead of a possible stock market flotation. Artists on Universal may now offer their music on Spotify's Premium tier before they appear on its free service.

Richard Baker bakerstonb@gmail.com

Bing
Hollywood

May 6, 1957

Mr. Charles Graves
15 Berkeley Court NW 1
London, England

Dear Charles:

Your letter of the 26th of April reached me up in Northern California where I'm doing a little trout fishing with a couple of friends. Very nice to hear from you again, and I'm pleased to learn that you and Bill Gargan and Mary got together for some functions. They must have gotten a great deal of enjoyment out of the trip to the Players Theatre. I found that a very amusing and colorful spot.

I saw Bob Foster up at Vegas, and he seemed to be enjoying himself immensely. He looked well, seemed happy, but it was too cold for us to get out on the golf course. Vegas has about 3,000 ft. altitude you know, and in the winter months, while some people play, it's a little rigorous for me.

I shall await receipt of the galley proofs on your Riviera tome and will compose some sort of a forward when I've had a chance to read them and devise something interesting.

Charles, I never played the Cafe de Paris with Whiteman. I joined him after his return from the European trip - I think it was in '26 or '27. Too many years ago to be recalled accurately for a variety of reasons. Of course I have been there since the war, for dinner and dancing, but strictly as a patron. It seems to me that the Cafe de Paris should furnish a very good background for some sort of book or picture. The years of it's heyday were a colorful period and should, if interestingly told, make very good reading.

Haven't played any golf for two or three weeks, but prior to that time was going in pretty good form. I went down to see the Masters Tournament, played some there, and finished second in a tournament over at Aiken, South Carolina - a two-man amateur event. Have been flirting with 72 and 3 and 4 pretty near all the time when it wasn't too windy or cold.

I saw Cotton play in the Masters and he played very well indeed. He still has that beautiful swing. Demaret is playing better golf I think than he ever played in his life. He should have won both the Masters and the Vegas event if he could have holed a few putts. He was stroking the ball well but they were sliding by or hanging on the lip and refused to drop. Just two or three one way or the other would have made the difference between winning and finishing second or third.

Hogan's putting has become very sour. I played with him at Seminole, and again at the Masters before the tournament started, and he just has no confidence with the blade, leaves most of his putts short, and it's become sort of a mental block with him now and he is in bad trouble. Hits the ball beautifully, but of course you know how important it is to putt well if you're going to win anything in the professional tournament ranks.

I agree with you that Hope is very courageous indeed to attempt a picture with Fernandel. I am sure that with all the grimacing and mugging these two comics are indulging in, their faces will be stretched out of all semblance to their former contours. Still, you can't tell, Hope may look better that way.

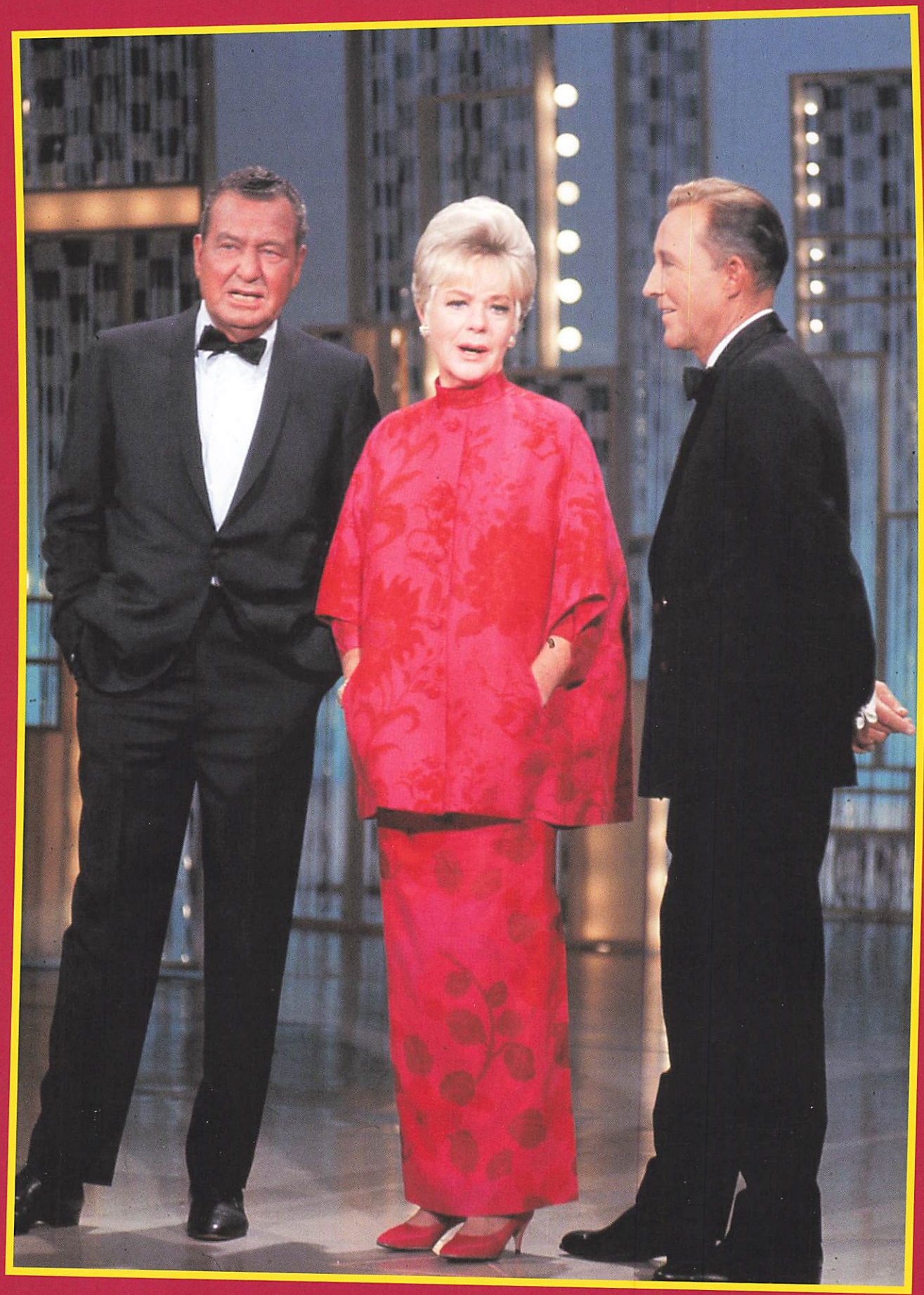
Give my very best to the Gargans when you see them, and also Bob Foster. I may slip over some time this summer, but it's quite doubtful. I have quite a few junkets mapped out for this summer which may prevent me getting over there - no work involved in these junkets, strictly for fishing, golf and fun.

All the best to you and your family -

As ever,

Bing

Bing Crosby



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